DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

"The Modern School Story:

Introducing Wizards, Vampires, Spies & Co."

Verfasserin

Lisa Maria Cerar

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)

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Table of contents

<u>Abbreviations</u>

SST/s … school story/stories

BSST/s … boy school story/stories

GSST/s … girl school story/stories

HP … *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

ILY … *I'd tell you I love you, but then I'd have to kill you*.

VA … *Vampire Academy*.

I. THEORY

1. Introduction

Within the realm of children's literature, school-based texts have always played an important role, since this is a topic with which children can rather easily connect because of their own experiences. In the 19th and 20th century, these school-based texts became extremely popular and many of them were formulised and included into the genre of the classic SST which possessed – like every genre – its typical conventions and elements. After the middle of the last century, however, the popularity of the genre declined and many literary critics believed that the genre was, in fact, dead.[1] However, throughout the last two decades, the genre has reappeared and all in all, literary critics now seem to agree on the fact that the SST has survived and is still a popular part of children's literature (not least due to the help of Harry Potter), although it has undergone various changes and the classic model had to adapt to the new circumstances. The SST does not exist in its classic form any longer, but has undergone some transformations in order to adapt to the new circumstances of the 21st century.[2]

One of my consequent hypotheses is that in order to adapt the old genre to the 21st century, its intended audience and their desires and expectations regarding the books, additional elements (e.g. many elements of fantasy fiction) have been added to the books and thus the mixture of the classic school story plus additional (fantastic) elements makes the successful cocktail of the modern school story. Some literary professionals[3] support this hypothesis and argue in favour of the addition of new elements; yet, they have never presented a detailed analysis thereof. Consequently, the present diploma thesis should offer a contribution to the already existing literature on school fiction by examining three representatives of the modern SST in terms of their new features and values, and compare these to the classic model of the last two centuries. The analysis should show that while new elements are added, authors still keep some of the classic features of the SST, probably due to the former success of the genre and the connotations and expectations which readers have regarding that

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[1] See for instance "From Brown to Bunter: The Life and Death of the School Story" by Peter William Musgrave.
[2] Ju Gosling, for example, talks about the changes in the GSST and its remaining popularity (*sig* 41-58), and Sheila Ray addresses these issues on a more general level (356-358).
[3] Such as Pinsent, or Manners Smith.

type of fiction, thus offering the reader a framework for orientation into which new and unfamiliar elements are included, because merely the school setting would probably not be enough to attract readers' attention.

The analysis of three representatives of the modern SST hopefully offers some insights in how far the modern versions differs from the traditional and classic model, and shall demonstrate what has been added and what has remained the same. My assumption is that a major part of the new elements is made up by features connected to fantasy fiction; yet, it is possibly simply the mixture of old and new features which is the important criterion for belonging to the genre of the modern SST, and not the exact nature of these new elements, and therefore fantastic elements are probably not the only ones which have been added.

This mixture of traditional and modern, or familiar and unfamiliar elements, or in Natov's words the "extraordinariness of the ordinary", is probably connected to my second hypothesis, namely that even though many new and unfamiliar elements – sometimes even of fantastic or at least unrealistic nature – have been added, readers' identification and empathy with the characters of the modern SST is still somehow maintained, since this is a major factor in determining the success of a book. The mixture of elements seems to be key to solving the dilemma with which each author has to deal, namely that of finding the balance between attracting the attention of readers by offering unfamiliar and fabulous elements, while at the same time leaving enough space for identification and empathy by offering the right amount of familiar aspects.[4]

While the concept of school is very familiar to the readers, their attention is possibly still attracted because of the genre and its setting, since boarding school is no longer a common concept and contains connotations of mystery, exclusiveness and nostalgia, in addition to the new aspects which have been added. These new features enhance the special nature of the setting of the SST (which in itself already contributes to the special nature of the genre since it is no common notion anymore), and thereby the boarding school life becomes something extraordinary, special, and mysterious rather than an outdated concept. Hence, the success of the modern SST

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[4] See also chapters 3 and 4.

might be due to the genre and its setting (since boarding school is not longer a common concept and contains connotations of mystery, exclusiveness and nostalgia) as well as the newly added elements, because all these features taken together form a new, abnormal and extraordinary entity – the modern school story.

Therefore, the present thesis should answer the two main questions of how the successful concept of the modern SST is realised (i.e. in how far it differs from the old model and how the old model has been adapted to the 21st century), and how it is still possible to create the bond between reader and characters, i.e. identification and empathy with them, even though the characters of the modern SST are wizards, vampires, or spies, and thus evidently different from their readers. In other words, it should answer the question of how authors manage to attract readers' attention for the modern school story.

2. The classic school story of the 19th and 20th century

In order to be able to analyse the modern representatives of the SST, the following section should provide a historical overview on the classic model and the developments it has undergone until finally transforming into the modern SST. To begin with, it is probably quite useful to define what a SST actually is, and according to my opinion, the best definition is offered by Grenby when he explains what is usually named as the three basic characteristics of a BSST:

> [I]t is set almost entirely in school; it takes the relationship between scholars and their teachers as its primary focus; and it contains attitudes and adventures which are unique to school life. [...] [However,] [t]he same definition works for the many series which became so popular in the golden age of the girls' story [...]. (*School Story* 90)

As can be seen from this definition, there seems to be an important distinction between BSSTs and GSSTs; however, the basic criteria are the same for both subtypes. Similarly, Pinsent, who focuses on the GSST, mentions some elements which are typical for the GSST but can also occur in the BSST (12). Since there appears to be no real distinction between BSST and GSST anymore as it is rather typical to mix both types to reach a wider audience, these two subgenres have obviously merged at least to some extent. Consequently, in this diploma thesis the typical features (if not emphasised otherwise) are treated as characteristic features of THE SST, irrespective of whether male or female students attend the school and whether the author determined it originally as typical for either the BSST or the GSST. However, since this distinction seemed to be very important for the development of school fiction, one of the following subchapters is dedicated to this topic. Moreover, the origins of the genre, as well as the developments after the Second World War until the beginning of the 21st century are covered.

2.1. The origins of the school story

Before mentioning the precursors of the SST and the type of literature from which the classic SST emerged, it seems to be essential to first answer the question: Why does such a thing as school fiction and consequently the school story exist? The answer for this question can possibly be found in Zipes, who claims that "[t]he inherent

connection between youth and education [...] makes the connection between children's literature and school a natural one. It is not surprising that school stories are among the earliest forms of children's literature" (School Stories 1805). The fact that school provides children with their primary possibility for making new experiences is thus reflected in literature, and a further advantage of school fiction is that it provides a setting and experiences which are "well within the comprehension of readers of children's books" (Ray 348). Grenby goes even a step further when declaring the inevitable necessity of the school setting and explaining the only three options that are left to authors of children's literature:

> The school setting merely provides the context. Indeed, since the later nineteenth century, almost all Western children have attended school, meaning that writers seeking to represent contemporary children's lives realistically have been more or less forced into one of three courses: to show their protagonists at school, to show them after school or in the school holidays (with the threat of school usually hanging over them), or to somehow remove them from school artificially. (*School Story* 91)

As can be seen from the introduction in chapter 2, however, the school setting is not the only key criterion for a school story, and therefore, not all stories which take place within a school or have references to it can be regarded as school stories; according to my definition, these then belong to the more general category of school fiction.

Before the classic SST could actually emerge, other books in which the school setting was present had already existed for a long time. According to Grenby, the very first account of school fiction can be found in Mesopotamia in about 2000 BCE, where scientists found school anecdotes carved into clay. From this early source onwards, school has appeared repeatedly in fiction, for example also in the Britain of medieval times, where the text type of school dialogues emerged, offering a picture of former classrooms and schooling situations. Hence, school fiction can in fact be used to reconstruct the schooling realities of former times (Grenby, *School Story* 88-89). Nevertheless, all these pieces of fiction can, for the one or the other reason, not be regarded as a classic SST, and although many sources[5] name Sarah Fielding's *The Governess or, Little Female Academy* from 1749 as the first real SST, Carpenter claims that "the full potential of the school story was not realized until 1875, when

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[5] See, for example, Simons (178).

Tom Brown's Schooldays by Thomas Hughes appeared, with immediate and huge success" (*School Stories* 470).

2.2. The classic school story of the 19th and 20th century: from boys to girls

As already mentioned, THE book which is normally cited when talking about the origins of the SST, is Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* which was written in 1875[6]. With books like this, the genre gained its popularity in 19th century England where it "essentially emerged from the exclusive world of the English public school [and the] long-standing belief that wealth and social position produce the statesmen, soldiers, and financiers who will one day run the world" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1805). Furthermore, it can be seen as a reflection of society, because at the same time as the public school gained its important and prestigious position within the British culture, this literary genre also arose to new heights; a fact which "is no coincidence; rather, it is another manifestation of the new importance attached to institutionalized education" (Petzold 17).[7]

In fact, one of the probably most essential features of the SST is that it is commonly assumed to be a British phenomenon. This is, for instance, emphasised by Grenby, who states that "the classic tradition of the school story […] does seem to be rooted in British culture", although the genre of the SST also existed outside the English-speaking world, for example in Germany or in the Soviet Union (*School Story* 87). Steege is one of the literary critics who deals with the British nature of the SST in contrast to the United States, and he even goes as far as claiming that this type of fiction would be "unimaginable as American books [...] precisely because of the boarding school elements" (153). He does not only describe the English values and elements within the genre, but also the fact that American editions often differ at least slightly from the British ones because the respective readers differ from each other too (152-155). As main reason for the differences in school fiction between America

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[6] See, e.g. Ray, who claims that "Thomas Hughes set the pattern for what came to be regarded as the traditional school story" (349), or Steege who writes that "the popularity and influence of *Tom Brown's School Days* opened the floodgates to countless public school stories" (141).
[7] Once again, this can be seen as an indication for the interdependence between the fictional schools and the real institutions; the first contributed to the development of the latter because they "formulated and propagated the educational aims of these institutions" (Petzold 17).

and Britain, critics usually mention the different historical contexts of schooling in the two countries which led to different cultural conceptions and understandings.[8] One of the American classics of the SST would be for instance *What Katy Did at School* by Katy Carr from 1873. Since the British nature seems to be a frequent feature of the SST (although it has probably lost its importance in the modern SST, see chapter 4), the following overview on the SST centres on the British model.

Besides the aforementioned Hughes, critics typically mention Frederic William Farrar (and his book *Eric, or, Little by Little* from 1858) and Rudyard Kipling (with *Stalky and Co.* from 1899) as the famous three of the BSST.[9] These three authors differed from each other in terms of their books and the values which they represented, and the most popular one of the three was by far Hughes, which is, at least according to Ray, a happy coincidence for the SST (349). This might have to do with the fact that Farrar's "sentimentally religious school stories" (Watson xi) present a "religious context, [in which] the worldly aims of public school education simply do not come into focus" (Petzold 19), and this might have been discouraging for many critics as well as readers. Nevertheless, all three authors seem to have played a major role in determining the standard of the SST, because in their books, "many of the conventions of the genre as we see it today were established, though it needed their development in twentieth-century school stories, for both boys and girls, fully to determine what we now recognize as the typical school story" (Pinsent 10). Yet, although Pinsent emphasises the importance of BSSTs, she does not forget to mention the influence of the GSST. This is not always the case because some critics appear to believe that these do not form part of the canon and that only the BSST is the typical and canonical model (ibid).

The classic form of the SST developed from the 1850s until the First World War, an event which destroyed the until then prevalent mood and the origins of this type of

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[8] See Zipes (*School Stories* 1810-1811) and Carpenter (470).
The influence of literature as a shaping factor of cultural conceptions, in this case of the notion of boarding school, can for instance be reread in Steege (143), as well as further explanations on why "American readers are not likely to pick up on the school story traditions in the way British readers […] might very well do" (152). Another author who does not only mention the influence of society on books and vice versa, but also the influence of books on other books is Simons, who reveals the factors of intertextuality and interreferentiality and thus the importance of the context to understand books and the developments in literature (173).
[9] For more information on the three authors see, e.g. Petzold, Ray and Zipes (*School Stories*). The best information on other authors of the BSST besides "the big three" can be found in Watson.

fiction (Watson ix). This development and the sudden demand of the market for children's literature had certainly to do with the introduction of compulsory education in Britain in 1880 because this led to higher numbers of potential readers (Gosling, *his* 12). Although it does not seem to be important any longer, the separation of this body of literature into BSST and GSST appears to be essential for understanding the classic model, because it reflected the external[10] circumstances of education at that time; since "schools were segregated by gender, public school stories were either boys' school stories or girls' school stories" (Steege 141). This is also the reason why the GSST, which is in its basics absolutely comparable to its male counterpart, developed almost 30 years later than the BSST, because fiction first adopted the at that time seemingly more important notion of male education (Mitchell 74). Hence, it is clear why many literary critics believe that the BSST should be regarded as the classic model and why it has often enjoyed a literary status denied to the GSST (Ray 350). However, just because the BSST developed earlier than the GSST due to external factors, the deserved importance should not be denied to the GSST, and readers of the latter seemed to agree on this because although there was always a steady demand for the BSST, there was no single author who enjoyed as much popularity as certain authors of the GSST[11] (ibid 353).

In this thesis, the differentiation between BSST and GSST should not be made in order to argue that one is 'better' than the other, since I personally think that they are equal and just developed separately because of their corresponding readerships and sociological circumstances. Like Ray, I believe that it should not be forgotten that despite their differences, they "have developed in parallel, but separately, partly because they have reflected educational developments in the real world" (ibid 348). Hence, the distinction should only be made in order to look more closely at the respective readerships, their situations, believes, expectations and opinions, since each book can mean many different things depending on the various types of readers who access the fictional world within a book.

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[10] In this context, the term external refers to fiction-external or literature-external circumstances (and not circumstances external to education).
[11] Further information on "the big five" of the GSST (as well as on their books) can be found in Ray, Pinsent and Gosling. In terms of the general popularity of the SST, Mitchell should be consulted (98).

Regarding the BSST, one would probably assume that its readership might also belong to the exclusive and privileged circle of the boarding school society which was presented in this fiction; yet, Grenby, as well as other critics, has observed that "these stories were read preponderantly by children from the lower-middle and working classes, rather than those who might actually be sent to the sort of expensive boarding school which they featured" (*School Story* 103). At first sight, this might be slightly confusing, but, in fact, it is rather obvious that the genre rather attracted those who did not have any possibility of experiencing boarding school in their real lives, and therefore they read this fiction in order to satisfy their imaginations of wealth and status[12] because "the English educational system, [was] based more than anything else on status" (ibid 104). Since the readers of BSSTs could not compare fiction to their own experiences but just to their imagination and expectations of what boarding school might be like, this inevitably led to a glorification of the notion[13], because reality was not always as rosy and shiny as described in the books.[14] Nevertheless, the readership of the BSST cannot be defined for sure, as has been noted for instance by Watson because it was "both enormous and diverse" (xi) and ranged from readers all across the British Empire to America. Moreover, the readership was not only comprised of boys, but also of former schoolboys who wanted to relive their glorified happiest days by indulging in this fiction; but even more fascinating was the existence of a female readership of the BSST: this consisted of curious sisters and mothers, who just wanted to gain insights into boarding school life by reading these books, since in the beginning they still did not possess an equivalent literary corpus (as well as equivalent schools) of their own (ibid).

Although it is not explicitly stated in the secondary literature, I believe that this was almost certainly not the case with the GSST, since boys at that time already had their own books and thus no need for the ones from the other sex. Another factor which might have contributed to the low prestige of the GSST within the male world was the context, because "[s]chool stories for girls first emerged within a culture that devalued female education" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1808). Hence, the first representatives emerged within a time of social changes and reforms at the turn of the century, and

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[12] An observation which had already been made by Orwell many years before.
[13] A glorification which was certainly enhanced by the "[a]dult nostalgia" since this audience had a tendency "to glorify school days as the happiest days of one's life" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1811).
[14] For instance, Manners Smith offers a vivid description of the actual boarding school life, namely by including aspects such as no privacy, pressure and control (69).

tried to cover and integrate the "underlying anxiety relating to the changing social role of girls and women" (Simons 166). Thus, at that time they exactly represented what girls needed right there in order to overcome their anxious and concerned feelings and find their new place within the changing society. Consequently, this was probably one of the most important factors for the GSST's popularity, together with the rising numbers of literate and educated girls who made this fiction popular – "[b]y 1920 the number had risen from 20,000 in 1897 to 185,000" (Gosling, *his* 1) – because it perfectly fulfilled their needs and expectations. Moreover, girls were – in contrast to boys – encouraged to read because the common assumption had it that this would help them in terms of character development (ibid 15).

As it was the case with the BSST, the lives of the readers of the GSST differed significantly from those of their fictional heroines – in fact, "many girls encountered the genre before the experience of school itself" (Gosling, *his* 9) – but exactly this made them so popular among girls. In the secondary literature many reasons can be found: for instance, Simons notes that "they [i.e. female readers] were entranced by the visions of community and companionship [...] [which the] writing evoked" (172), or Gosling thinks that "girls did not want mere representations of their school experiences to entertain them during their leisure time" (*his* 22).[15] Since the fictional accounts of boarding school owed very little to actual experiences (of their readers as well as their authors), Gosling has noted quite understandably that

> [f]rom the beginning, then, the world of girls' school stories owed more to myth than to reality, and authors read and used characteristics from each other's work. This self-referencing also functioned to make it clear to readers that the books were part of the genre as a whole, since this was obviously a key motivation for their reading. And, of course, the genre's characteristics developed as characteristics from one author's work became used by other writers and became stock elements of the genre as a whole. (ibid 29)

The different readerships might have been the key factor separating BSSTs from GSSTs, but there were certainly more differences to the two subgenres, even though they possessed the same basic structure and fundamental elements. First of all, as already mentioned above, they differed in terms of their status and often GSSTs were

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[15] Further reasons for the popularity and a more detailed analysis of readers' fascination with the SST can be found in chapter 2.5. of this diploma thesis.

"not taken seriously by anyone other than girls" (ibid 38). However, even though being less prestigious, the GSST came up with subcategories that cannot be found in the BSST, as for example the ballet school story (e.g. *Royal Ballet School Diaries* by Alexandra Moss, 2005), or the riding school story (e.g. *A Horse for Mary Beth* by Alison Hart, 1996) (Manners Smith 71).

Other aspects in which they certainly differed from each other were, moreover, education and the promoted values. While boys received an academic and intellectual education[16], girls' education was rather reduced to a social and informal one with a "focus on polite accomplishments [...], Bible study, and 'feminine' subjects such as history and modern languages" and this also stresses the attitudes towards girls' and women's intellectual inferiority (Zipes, *School Stories* 1808). With the time, however, this changed, as noted by Mitchell, because around 1900, "many parents from the business and professional classes understood the intellectual advantage in giving their daughters a 'boys' education'" and the medium which "taught girls the difference between the two styles" was the available fiction (86).

In terms of the values which were promoted by the respective education, "boys' school stories tend to promote a masculine ethos and advocate the values of toughness and independence" (Simons 176) which were certainly enforced by the common notions of "athleticism, honor, [and] friendship" (Manners Smith 71). Boys generally lived in a world where "fairness ultimately triumphs, honor is upheld, and pleasure is found in games and loyal friendship" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1811). GSSTs, on the other hand, "place the accent on love, warmth and security of friends, features as attractive to boy readers as to girls" (Simons 176) and much of the excitement of these stories could be found in notions such as "personal relationships, the loves, hates, jealousies and misunderstandings that create an emotionally charged world" (ibid 179). However, although social values such as emotions and feelings were still very important in girls' fiction,

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[16] According to Watson, this intellectual education and the importance of classical languages such as Latin and Greek had to do with the "[f]ierce snob appeal [that] explains much of the popularity of public school fiction" as well as with their reason for existence: "[they] existed for the single stated purpose of producing gentlemen" (xiii). Hence, education had a strong relation with prestige and the positive image one wanted to spread, and thus "outsiders could observe and absorb this wonderland" (ibid).

> *[h]onor* quickly became the key word in girls' school stories. Honor means fair play, defense of the weak, honesty, openness. It does not, however, necessarily mean obeying adult rules or subordinating one-self to teachers or mothers. *Honor* represents a corporate individuality. (Mitchell 87)

In other words, the further developed GSST adopted this pattern from the BSST in order to express new values of femininity, while still maintaining the typical "feminine" notions, i.e. "[t]he typically 'feminine' message – that girls must learn to care for other's feelings – is cast in the 'masculine' public language of honor and chivalry" (ibid 88).

As a consequence of the extreme mass popularity of the classic SST of the 19th and early 20th century, a huge literary corpus had to be produced within a short time. On the one hand, this led to an increasing formularisation of the plot, characters and the genre as a whole, because authors, in order to satisfy the demands of the market, did not engage in original and creative writing but often simply copied whole sequences and elements from previous stories. This, of course, led to increased criticism of the SST and its literary value among adults, who wanted to provide their children with "good" literature (ibid 98). On the other hand, it led to the spread of SSTs in magazines and so called halfpenny papers like *Schoolgirls Weekly* (1922-1939) because they were not as expensive as books and therefore easier to afford and hence more widely read than their counterparts in hardcover[17] (Ray 349).

Another duality within the school story fiction, which had nothing to do with the separation into BSST and GSST but rather with the external circumstances, is the divergence between pre- and post-war stories. Before the World Wars, in its origins, the "school setting [functioned] as a frame for moral tales" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1806) and the main message was the fight between good and bad characters which eventually had to lead to a victory of the good one who thus defended the social order, in other words the message was 'virtue over wickedness' (Watson x). After World War Second, "the school story becomes more grounded in realistic portrayals of adults and children at school" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1806), which means for

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[17] For a closer analysis of the girls' papers, Mitchell provides good insights. She especially focuses on working girls and women and their literature, and has noted the nonexistence of day schools in this type of fiction, hence raising the question "Why were there no day schools in the workgirls' papers? The only reasonable answer is that boarding school stories filled some need; they satisfied girls' emotions and made them crave more and more of the same" (93).

instance "the gradual inclusion of a greater degree of social realism" (Grenby, *School Story* 106) with all its positive as well as negative aspects of school life.[18]

Nevertheless, according to Grenby (ibid 105), these stories did not cease to be formulaic all of a sudden, even though they included realistic elements. They were probably more unconventional in comparison to the classic SST, but at the same time also less successful, and as it is described in Watson (xvii), the representations of school reality led to a lot of turmoil and confusion within the media[19] because people suddenly started to question whether the described realities truly happened like this in the real-life institutions.[20] Thus it seems that people somehow were not ready to accept these realities; they were rather happy with the nostalgic and glorifying classic model.

In terms of the GSST, it has to be said that it reached its peak of popularity in the time between the two wars (Gosling, *his* 25), because the wars led to some significant changes regarding women's positions and their possibilities; for example, "the fact that some middle-class schoolgirls, both real and fictional, now had access to a very similar type of schooling to that of their brothers signified a revolution in the status of and opportunities open to girls" (ibid 14).[21] One author who used the new situation for girls as base for her novels was Angela Brazil, thus hitting the nerve of the time by working with the expectations of her readers and showing the differences and the advantages of the new educational system in contrast to the older restrictions for girls (Simons 177). Although older versions of the SST had featured single-sex environments (because especially concerning the GSST it was believed that girls could obtain more by being educated separately from boys), the years after the World Wars marked the supposition that co-educational education would provide students with a better preparation for the situations they would encounter in their later lives (Gosling, *his* 43).

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[18] The growing importance of children's book criticism might also have contributed to the inclusion of realism into the SST, because for critics, realism and reality have always been essential criteria in determining the value of a children's book (Gosling, *his* 39).
[19] See, e.g. Carpenter (470).
[20] One book which led to an especially heated discussion was *The Chocolate War*, 1974, by Robert Cormier.
[21] However, as explained in Mitchell, these new opportunities did not come without any conflict potential because for instance "the conflict between home and school" became quite obvious (80).

2.3. Further developments: the emergence of the modern school story

Somewhere after the middle of the 20th century, probably around the 1960s and 1970s, many critics – as well as teachers, librarians, parents and the media – started to believe in the death of the school story, and they thought that this genre "should certainly be buried as quickly as possible" (Gosling, *his* 41). However, this belief in the "terminal decline" (Pinsent 9) of the SST has not only been proved as being wrong by various critics, but also by the very fact that it still exists within children's literature. Not only are the old classics by famous authors such as Enid Blyton still read by today's generations of children, but in particular the addition of new books to the already existing corpus of SSTs (more than ever after the incredibly successful publication of the *Harry Potter* series) serves as proof for the remaining popularity of the genre and the fact that "the school story still flourishes" (Grenby, *School Story* 112).

What, nevertheless, is absolutely true and undisputed is that nowadays, the genre hardly ever (or never) appears in the original form of the classic SST; it has undergone a "paradigm shift" (Pinsent 9) and this chapter should help to illustrate the developments and changes in the second half of the 20th century, which eventually led to the emergence of the modern school story and in consequence to the before mentioned paradigm shift. Zipes stresses the existence of recurring elements which contribute to the somehow formulaic nature of the modern school story, i.e. even though it is "modern", it does not eliminate all the formulaic ingredients which have made the classic model so popular. However, "the contours of the genre have changed dramatically over time as educational theory, the roles of schools in society, and interpretations of children's natures and of children's needs have altered" (*School Stories* 1805). In consequence, according to my definition, the modern SST represents a new literary form, namely as I will call it[22], the subgenre of "fantasy school fiction". Yet, what should be remembered is the fact that the changes in the SST have not been conscious decisions on the authors' part. They should rather be interpreted as tendencies and trends due to the demands of the market, and the desires, expectations and imagination of the readers which had to be fulfilled, and not as the conscious introduction of new features made by a specific group of writers.

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[22] By adopting Pinsent's term (19).

The first impetus for changes to the SST occurred in the 1960s, when it became clear that the interest in the classic model had almost vanished and thus something had to change in order to reanimate the once so successful genre.[23] The reanimation might have also been triggered by the fact that by the end of the 1960s, authors did not want to abolish the school setting because they thought of "the enclosed world of school [as] an ideal framework within which to explore matters of concern to young people" (Ray 356). As this quote shows, however, they now intended to include "matters of concern to young people"; in other words, the stories became more realistic and included virtually all of the problematic issues of adolescence. The newly developed model "dealt with sex, racism, dyslexia, drugs and many other 'problem issues' from their inception in 1980 [...] but the traditional school story format remained in place" (Grenby, *School Story* 90). The introduction of some of these matters might also have been due to the newly introduced co-educational scheme, because in the older model the opportunity to explore these issues often simply did not exist, since it would have been hard to examine the notions of relationships and sex between the two genders in the single-sex boarding school world of the 1900s. Although the introduction of mixed education and the hence connected issues of relationships and sex might have been the most obvious innovation, these were by far not the only troubles added to the SST:

> amongst other things, shoplifting, teenage pregnancy, suicide, Asperger's syndrome, child abuse, truancy, racism, disability, AIDS, playground knifings, rape, alcoholism, homophobia, drug-abuse and bereavement [also featured in the new model]. (ibid 109)

As can be seen from this huge list of problems, the new model really tried to cover all possible aspects of trouble in order to present a realistic picture of adolescents and their struggles.[24] Yet, this accumulation of problems might point to another (rather negative) message, namely that "schools [...] [are] places of unrest and social unease for many children and young adults" as well as "the growing awareness that school – or, indeed, home – may fail to support or nurture children" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1813). In this negative view of school (and, in fact, society), it seems that the "basic

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[23] A concise overview on earlier changes in the genre can be found in Watson (xvii-xviii).
[24] If the authors of these books really achieve their goal is another question though, because in the end, all the troubles lead to a perhaps rather unrealistic portrayal of school and pupils dealing with three lifetimes of troubles.

requirements for a 'good' school [...] often fail to be met" and they are demonstrated as "impersonal, violent and oppressive places" (ibid 1816). Even though the overall optimistic and positive aspect of school has been abolished, "[s]chool stories designed for either younger or older readers [still] tend to be deeply reassuring; even if school is a scary, boring, or alienating place, the ultimate message they convey is that you are not alone" (ibid).

Moreover, whether connected to this negative representation of school or not, recently, the enclosed world of the boarding school is often forced open, and turned into a high school setting where the "lives outside of school are portrayed as being equally or more important than [...] school experiences" (Gosling, *his* 44). Thus, the now very popular subgenre of the high school story emerged, and this genre cannot only be found in books but has often been adapted in other media like television and films, as can be seen by its many representatives like *Grange Hill*, *Sweet Valley High*, *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Home and Away* or the recent success of the *High School Musical*-world.[25]

An even further development out of these 'realistic versions' of the SST, which at the same time symbolised somehow a return to at least some of the typical features of the classic SST, surfaced in the last decades of the 20th century and has not lost its popularity till today:

> Fantasy school fiction, a variation on the genre which became more numerous in the last third of the twentieth century, tends, however, to revert to a significantly greater extent to the typology of the earlier school novels, often including the setting of a boarding-school environment. (Pinsent 19)

The appearance of this subtype of school fiction is certainly related to the "long-standing cross-media potential of the school story, and [...] its ability to merge successfully with other genres" (Grenby, *School Story* 112). The introduction of fantasy elements within the SST evidently signifies a deviation from the norm of 'realistic' SSTs which seemed to dominate the time before. However, since literature can always be seen as somehow reflecting society and, of course, its readers and

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[25] See, e.g. Steege (143), or Grenby (*School Story* 106-109).

their expectations, it looks as if readers' expectations and the demand of the market have changed. 'Realistic' accounts no longer provide the potential for fascination and appeal, in contrast to their 'unrealistic' counterparts which describe a world of magic and fantasy within the school setting and are for this reason extremely popular.[26]

THE book which is always cited in this context is obviously the *Harry Potter* saga by J.K. Rowling. Various literary critics have spent their time on analysing these books from all possible angles, but what they can never leave out is the aspect of its connection to the SST. One fascinating point which has been found out by Steege is how Rowling came up with the successful combination of fantasy and school story, namely by consciously maintaining certain elements of the classic SST while at the same time ignoring others:

> Rowling has both used and transformed the elements of [...] [the] basic plot, emphasising the more fun and positive aspect of the experience while maintaining a sense of struggle and conflict. As a result, we have the return of the boarding school novel, updated and modified for the contemporary readers in ways so appealing that we are left envious, wishing we too had received that invitation to enter Hogwarts and become boarding school boys and girls. In new guise, the genre made popular by Tom Brown has been revivified by Harry Potter, allowing it not only to cross the Atlantic successfully but also to conquer those American readers for whom boarding schools are unfamiliar and the public school story completely unknown. (156)

And really, Rowling's concept seems to be her secret of success and popularity, as her novels have quite impressively shown. By adopting the setting and some of the typical conventions of the SST, she manages to create a world which is not only comprehensible[27] but with which children can also identify since they share the common experience of schooling with the protagonist. Thus, she accomplishes to preserve the aspect of reader identification and empathy with the characters which seems to be quite important[28], although, of course, the common reader does not

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[26] I would not argue that the fantasy elements and the magic are the only reason for its popularity because there are certainly other aspects which also contribute to the success. However, they seem to be one key factor and hence should definitely be analysed more closely.
[27] Besides being comprehensible, it is also "a comfortable zone in which the danger and magic of Harry Potter's world can be safely negotiated by children of many ages and many backgrounds in our world" (Manners Smith 84).
[28] For a further analysis of this issue see chapter 5.6.

possess magical powers and does not have to fight against the ultimate evil forces (Manners Smith 80).

Besides adding fantasy and magic to the nostalgic atmosphere of the classic boarding school, she "also engages in political and cultural modernization of the school story genre" (ibid 83), which means that she, for example, includes aspects of gender and race. Thus, she uses the old setting for her own advantage, because she does not only play with the connotations and cultural concepts connected to boarding school, but as so many authors before her, she uses "the advantage given to the author by the virtual 'island', remote from urban society" (Pinsent 17).

Fantasy and magic have not been the only genres with which the SST was successfully combined; further it has already merged at times with mystery and adventure as well as horror and spy fiction (Manners Smith 74), even though it has to be admitted that J.K. Rowling's books were by far the most successful coalescence of genres. But it seems to be exactly this ability of the SST, namely the ability to blend and adapt, which "has kept the school story alive for many centuries. The form shows no sign of obsolescence" (Grenby, *School Story* 112).

Hence, no matter in which of its new forms and adaptations, the traditional boarding school setting of the classic SST has apparently not lost its appeal, and Ray best summarizes this fact when stating that

> [a]t the end of the twentieth century [and the beginning of the twenty-first], school, whatever its nature, remains an attractive setting for a story for younger people, providing a stable and safe environment in which children from different backgrounds can meet, develop relationships and share experiences. School stories continue to appeal to children at the age when the peer group is all important, when they are seeking independence and [are] curious about what lies ahead. (358)

2.4. Characteristic elements of the (classic) school story

After having summarised the history of the school story from its origins to its newest developments, namely the modern school story of the 21st century[29], this chapter now tries to sum up the essential qualities and key elements of the (classic) school story. The word 'classic' in brackets should indicate that these elements have developed with the emergence of the classic SST; however, one should not only confine them to the classic model because most of these elements (at least the ones that are comprehensible and promise entertainment for today's audience) are also implemented into the modern school story. Hence, the word in brackets specifies the origin, while the brackets show that the classic model is not the only form containing these features.

2.4.1. Setting

As the name of the genre already tells, the most important narrative device of the school story is its setting, namely usually a boarding school. But then, what makes the difference between the many stories set in school and a school story? The answer is that in a typical SST, the school does not only function as the setting of the story, but "school itself is as much the protagonist as the individual students" (Steege 142). Pinsent, for example, also shares this opinion when writing that "[t]he school itself often becomes a kind of additional character in the book" and adds to the "strong sense of place and ethos" (13). This means that school is not only used as a background to the narrative, but the whole narrative centres on school and the "incidents and attitudes which are implicit in, not extrinsic to, school life" (Grenby, *School Story* 113). Crucial to the setting of the boarding school is that it forms a special, exclusive and enclosed world of its own, thus allowing the author "to create places outside of normal time and space" (Pinsent 8), places with their own conventions and rules that have to be obeyed. The extraordinariness of these places is emphasised by the fact that new students, who often enter the world together with the reader, experience them as places of 'novelty and possibility', where anything

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[29] If I talk about the 21st century in this context, I basically mean books which have been written in this time. However, when analysing my primary sources, one notes that the first book of the Harry Potter series has already been published in the late 20th century. Nevertheless, I also consider it as belonging to the modern school story of the 21st century; first of all because the later books of the series were published in this time, and secondly because the first book is still read today in the 21st century, thus having a strong connection to it.

seems possible; "literally or figuratively, these spaces are presented as magical" (Steege 145).

Since the "microcosm"[30] of the school is that important to the SST, there is no room left for the influences of the world outside the institution, and therefore "the outside world largely drops away and the hero can concentrate on his own exploits and development" (ibid). The outside world, or macrocosm, is only present through the microcosm of school, which either mirrors it, or contradicts it by illustrating an alternative way of living (Pinsent 8). Once inside the world of the school, the outside world and external relations do not play any role any longer; it is a world where the students rule and can develop without the pressure and watching eye of their parents because "adults were unquestionably relegated to the shadows" (Simons 169). Of course, there also exist some adult figures in form of teachers and headmasters and –mistresses, yet, the 'no-adults-policy' is stressed by the fact that their roles are not as important as those of their students and they are often barely visible throughout the narrative (Mitchell 80). In general, this minor importance of adults was seen as something positive and thus used consciously by the authors to stress "the importance of self-reliance and loyalty to peers" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1805).

One consequence of the visible lack of important adult figures is that the main focus of the SST lies on the relationships between the students, who act as alternatives to family members and hence in the "sense of extended family" (Simons 171). The enclosed space of school furthermore contributes to a "heightened intensity" (ibid 178) of these relationships and the connected emotions and feelings, and consequently the focus is often not that much on the actual school life but rather "on the emotional (sometimes physical), psychological, and social development of the child character apart from the family's influence" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1805). Since students are assigned a lot of responsibility within the SST, they often have to fight their battles on their own (mainly without the evident help of adults, although these eventually often function as advisors who help students for instance by resolving all their self-doubts). This could be seen as preparing them for the problems of the 'real life' outside the shielding walls of school into which they should finally be able to

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[30] For the use of this term, see Steege (145), or Pinsent (8), as well as Ray (348), or Zipes (*School Stories* 1805).

integrate themselves successfully (Petzold 19). Nevertheless, despite all the rules that have to be obeyed and the struggles and troubles which have to be overcome, authors usually do not forget about presenting school as a "place of fun and adventure" (Mitchell 80), thus normally stressing the positive aspects (like freedom and community) over the negative ones.

One important side remark concerning the connection between setting and the GSST should be made at this point, namely that the enclosed and all-female world of the girls' boarding schools and the related absence of men and boys helped to "establish [...] a definitive and distinctive world of girl power" (Simons 171). Girls could be presented in a more positive light, namely as heroines of their own narratives rather than just as "daughters and future wives and mothers", and consequently "[s]chool as a great institution was a right thrill", something which former girls had never been able to experience (Gosling, *his* 8). This model of the modern girl[31] who was more or less independent, had her own responsibilities, and acted almost like a boy was definitely "more 'boyish' than boarding-school reality" (Mitchell 88); yet, it surely contributed to the fascination of the genre for girls because the GSST and its setting "suggest the possibility of escape from restrictive home life and a culture of compliance" (Simons 171).[32]

2.4.2. Characters

The SST has often been criticised for the little creativity which authors put into the design of their characters, because normally they adhered to the conventions, models, and images of characters typical to the genre. Regarding the protagonist and their friends, it is for instance interesting that many authors employ "the rule of the three", i.e. that the protagonists are grouped together with two best friends rather than with just one, because this opens up the plot as well as the possibilities for the author and more tension as well as action can be created (Manners Smith 74).

Typical for the characters in BSSTs as well as GSSTs is "the state of adolescence" in which they find themselves and "[i]t is this age group and its evolutionary character

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[31] For more information on the setting's influence on the role of the modern girl, see Simons.
[32] Further details on readers' (boys' and girls') fascination with the SST can be found in chapter 2.5.

that essentially determines the nature of the action" (Simons 172). In other words, age is the key factor which unites all the student characters, regardless of how much they might differ concerning other qualities, and it is also key to the plot.

Other stereotypical student characters which repeatedly appear within SSTs are, for example, the new student who usually offers the main impetus for the plot, because they regularly provide the story with conflicts arising from prejudices, the initial inability to integrate themselves into the existing community, their lack of knowledge regarding the school's and the community's rules, and implicit laws in terms of behaviour. Actually, Grenby has named this issue as one of the main plot devices of the SST: "Indeed, a great many school stories deal directly with the gradual integration of new pupils into the school community" (*School Story* 92). In addition, these characters are, like the reader, unfamiliar with the situation, and hence their unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge helps the reader to enter the unknown world and adapt to it by accompanying them (Pinsent 11-13).

Generally, the characters help their authors to convey particular images and values and this was especially important to the GSST, which offered besides the stereotype of the new girl also the model of the modern girl, because

> that new creature, the modern schoolgirl, [was] a distinctive creation quite unlike her antecedents in that she relishes her freedom from the bounds of home, identifies with a community of peers rather than with her family, and during the process of the story, she discovers herself as an independent and educated being. (Simons 179)

This prototypical character is seen as embodying the new values and the new image of a modern girl, who is as good as any boy, and should not be confused with the stereotype of the newly arriving girl, which is also often referred to as "the new girl" (Gosling, *sig* 17). In order to not confuse these two types of *the new girl*, the one referring to the new model of femininity should in the following be called "modern girl" whereas the newly arriving girl, who is new to the school community, shall be the "new girl". As the introduction and following use of this stock character of the modern girl[33] shows, stereotypes could very effectively be used for not only spreading images

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[33] More facts on the prototype of the modern girl can be found, for instance, in Simons and Zipes (*School Stories*).

of a new and modern culture (in this case of girlhood) – even if they lagged behind reality – but also for fuelling the readers' desires and dreams, thus increasing their fascination with and the appeal of the genre (Mitchell 80).

Of course, not only student characters are stereotypically designed; in terms of teacher figures one can find typical conventions too. As already mentioned above, adult figures are usually inexistent within the SST, and therefore teachers and headmasters and -mistresses are often the only figures representing this aspect of the world. In terms of the headmasters and –mistresses, it can be observed that they are the

> adults our heroes come to trust and value, and who in turn support, protect, and guide the boys. They are portrayed as moral, fair, kind, and unusual men who at times face criticism from within and without but always have the best interests of their school at heart. (Steege 151)

They are usually in possession of power and knowledge, and generally know what to do when and how, thus supporting the heroes and heroines with useful advice and sometimes even scolding to provide the students with helpful lessons so that they can "develop into a functioning, useful young man [or woman] of good character" (ibid 150). By employing this strategy, they are often depicted in contrast to their teachers, because although they are often rather eccentric, they always "discern when to nurture, when to pardon, and when to exert [...] [their] power" even though they sometimes have to stretch the rules and regulations for particular students because they think it to be in the best interest of everyone, hence sometimes eluding not only the school's regulations and laws but also their teachers (ibid 151). Quite the opposite, however, is the depiction of teachers, because although there are usually some skilled mentors among them who support their students and present the model of the good teacher, there always exist bad teachers who are either bad at what they are doing because they lack interest and/or talent or pursue wrong goals of education, or they are simply evil characters who find pleasure in tormenting their students by abusing their position of power. As Watson has expressed in a quite negative way, "[t]he memoirs of every upper-class British male seem to have been packed with treasured examples of 'pedagogic stupidity'" (xv).

Certainly, the above mentioned stereotypical characters are only a little part of the whole repertoire; further information can either be found in the secondary literature, or in the analytic part of this diploma thesis (see chapters 5.2 and 5.3.).

2.4.3. Formulaic plot, recurring elements, and values

The SST has not only been criticised because of its stock characters, but also because of its formulaic nature concerning plot and typical values, and recurring elements. However, these issues are innate to genre fiction and have also highly contributed to the success of the SST, a topic which is discussed in the next chapter.

The "paradigmatic narrative model" (Simons 180) of the SST includes in its most classic form a journey from the home of the students to their school, typically by train, which gives the author the chance to introduce the reader to the situation and the characters and also rather explicitly illustrates the boundary which students pass, i.e. the boundary between their homes and the world of their school.[34] As soon as students enter the school grounds, they are disconnected from the outside world, and find themselves in an enclosed world of its own; "an alien country where [...] [students] and the staff are the inhabitants" (Pinsent 12). There, they are free from the parental influence, which does not reach across the boundary (ibid 12-15).

Although students find themselves for most of the story within the realm of school and education, actual school lessons and classroom experiences do not dominate the plot. Indeed, they are, in fact, almost inexistent, and the reasons for ignoring certain features of school reality and the life of pupils might be the "authors' desire to spare the (child) reader the most boring and most offensive aspects of school life, but also sheer lack of interest" (Petzold 21).[35] However, by doing so, authors do not tell the whole truth, because in reality, school life is not only fun and entertainment, but often also hard work and effort and students have to struggle with academic problems. Nevertheless, literature generally does not mimetically describe the reality of its readers, but rather an imagined version of how reality should be like, in order to

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[34] As already mentioned in chapter 2.4.1., the setting is usually an enclosed space which has hardly any connections to the outside world, and the journey to school clearly marks the entry to this special place by disconnecting students from their homes and parents; in other words from the outside world.
[35] In chapter 2.4.1. on the setting, it becomes quite clear that fun and entertainment are more important.

appeal to its readers and stimulate their desires and fascination of reading[36] (ibid). Consequently, the often boring reality of school life is left out and the SST describes school "as a place of socialization and of subversion, and as an educational establishment in which the lessons learned generally take place outside the classroom" (Pinsent 8). As a result, the plot can concentrate on other – probably more appealing – topics such as adventures, fights, rule breaking and the probing of one's own limits, relationships and arising conflicts; in other words, extracurricular activities move into the focus of attention: the protagonists' development and coming of age are the main issues (Steege 149).

The possibly most important issue of SSTs are relationships between students, friends, and enemies, and generally the aspects of socialisation and integration into a community. These elements feature virtually in every SST, and according to Grenby, it is quite easy to detect the reasons for this phenomenon:

> First, it provides a frame for the narrative. Second, it was often designed to reassure nervous pupils that they would soon find friends. After all, school stories have often been written for the benefit of scared school entrants [...]. And third, the acquisition of friends is central to one of the key themes of the school story, what we might call socialisation, or, to borrow a term from psychoanalysis, individuation. (*School Story* 92)

This quote quite evidently shows the necessity of friendships for a SST, and it also indicates the connection between friendship and socialisation. The phenomenon of socialisation basically means the finding and developing of the individual identity while at the same time achieving to integrate oneself successfully into the collective. This process requires maturation of the characters as well as their sense of independence and self-reliance, because they have to manage the difficult task of balancing the two entities of self and community, and the school setting provides them with the perfect chance to do so (ibid 92-112). According to Petzold, the aspect of socialisation within the school setting has not always played an important role, because it has probably only developed in the 19th century with the growing importance and influence of schools. However, the main concern of SSTs was also in its origins "moral education and character forming, in other words: socialization" (17),

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[36] This notion of an imagined reality is extensively discussed in the part of this thesis dedicated to fantasy (see chapter 3).

and thus he indicates the inevitable importance of this issue for the SST. Another interesting point is that he does not forget to mention that fiction itself contributes to the process of socialisation, and thus readers do not only read about the phenomenon, but by doing so, they actually contribute to their own socialising process (ibid).

Obviously, the whole process of socialisation cannot take place without arising conflicts, not least because of the adolescent characters who, in their developmental stage, usually tend to extreme reactions and feelings, or as Watson has observed, "[i]dealism tends to be livelier, compromise more painful, friendship more ardent, and misery more acute during the transition from childhood to maturity" (xiii). This actuality is quite advantageous for the authors, because it helps to intensify the tension within the story by dramatising the nature of the conflicts.[37]

The plot is also driven by the often competing values and students' inner torments in choosing the right ones. This decision is not always an easy one, since it is part of the before already mentioned socialisation process, in which the individual characters have to come to terms with their own identity and who they actually are; and the procedure of making one's own decisions and at the same time satisfying the values prevalent in the community can confuse the whole issue. In other words, students have to gain self-esteem and fight the natural urge to please others, because sometimes they have to neglect their "anxiety about how they are regarded within the school" (Grenby, *School Story* 109) in order to act in such a way as to please their own values and moral standards. Hence, central topics such as "weakness or strength, [and] honor or shame" (Watson xiii) are triggered and play an important role within the SST. The conflict potential which arises because of differing and sometimes competing sets of values is also enhanced by the fact that students still have to mature, and thus their ideals and standards might change in the course of the story.

Finally, at this point one central topic of the SST which is connected to the general values of honour and acceptance should be briefly described, namely the topic of

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[37] Concerning the issue of conflicts, Watson has noticed the similarity between the SST and the fairy tale by connecting them with the notion of 'foolishness' and similar nature of their protagonists (xiii-xiv).

sports and games.[38] The importance of this issue is, according to my opinion, probably best emphasised by Watson's expression of the "cult of athletics" (xiv), which quite impressively shows that these notions were not only a pastime, but highly prestigious and valued. Being good at sports automatically meant admiration and thus acceptance by others; and since adolescents are usually very concerned about their position within the community, the value of sports is quite evident because "ability at athletics proves crucial to [...] [one's] success at school" (Steege 148) and Gosling even goes as far as describing "playing for the school [...] [as] the most highly prized contribution which a girl could make towards her community" (*sig* 13).

In general, the realm of sports could also be perfectly used to convey the values of leadership and submission which are automatically developed by the students when engaging in the practices on the sports fields (Petzold 18). In addition, Watson claims that sports and games are particularly common to the BSST because physical strength is the power which is best understood by boys, and hence they either understand power relations through success at sports or corporal punishment (xv). The evident frequency of sports has also led to some criticism, because schools were thus depicted as not being intellectual enough since "[l]earning itself, in these most exclusive, most expensive schools, was generally despised" (ibid xiv).

2.5. The fascination of the school story

Interestingly, from its very beginnings, the SST has always exerted a certain appeal and fascination over readers, and since this has not stopped in the last few decades, this ongoing fascination and thus the important position of the SST as a part of (especially the British) culture and the literary canon should definitely be examined more closely, because this opinion about the continuing importance and fascination of the genre serves as one of the essential justifications for writing my diploma thesis, and is supported, e.g. by Gosling (*his* 57). However, Gosling offers an additional and very sensible reason for closer examination:

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[38] Further essential notions of the SST, such as the fight between good and evil can be found in the analytical part of this diploma thesis, see chapters 4 and 5.

> [I]n a society where literacy has never been more important and yet reading is declining, a greater understanding of how and why the genre has given pleasure in the twentieth century should be helpful in determining how to encourage young people – boys particularly, since they read the least – to continue to read in the twenty-first. (ibid 58)

Manners Smith, for instance, has observed that nowadays students rarely attend private boarding schools (only 3 to 6% of all the pupils attending secondary school do so), "but these low numbers have not diminished the enduring appeal of the *idea* of boarding school or its popularity as subject matter for British writers of children's fiction and their readers" (70). However, I would not say 'but'; instead, I would argue that especially these low numbers – amongst other factors – have led to the fascination of the boarding school.[39] These low numbers, for example, contribute to the image of the boarding school as something unknown which diverges from the readers' realities and thus its appeal and readers' fascination are increased.[40]

One literary critic who has described the appeal of the SST quite well is Watson, who claims that

> [m]any readers over the years have been drawn into the deadly sin of gluttony by English school[...] stories. These have the power [...] to attract followers, not merely loyal, but so greedy that even the most prolific authors cannot satisfy their appetites. Desperate fans soon discover that devouring an old favorite for the tenth time is only slightly less pleasurable than savoring a fresh discovery or a fresh installment by an established friend. (ix)

This quote shows the extreme extent of the fascination, since he addresses it as the "deadly sin of gluttony", which impressively emphasises the important role the SST has played and still plays in children's lives and culture in general. Another critic, who also depicts the SST and its appeal as something which children simply could not escape, is Simons. She states that readers "succumbed wholeheartedly to the allure of the boarding school myth, overcoming barriers both of age and social class in the process" (165). As becomes clear from this quote, at least in the early years, the barrier of gender still existed and could not be overcome; a fact which is demonstrated by the existence of BSSTs and GSSTs. Nevertheless, in recent fiction,

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[39] See also Manners Smith (168).
[40] This notion of fiction versus reality will be addressed below, since it seems to be a key factor for the fascination and thus merits closer examination.

even this barrier has been overcome through the authors' deliberate decision of commonly representing mixed-gender schools.

The question which should now be examined in the following is *which* factors contributed to the "winning narrative formula" (Simons 173) of the SST and its "mythic appeal that reached across continents and generations" (ibid 175). Clearly, it had to satisfy the demands of the readers and the market in order to be that successful, and hence also these issues should be analysed.

As Gosling has sensibly remarked, "genre fiction develops largely as a result of demand from readers" (*sig* 2), and consequently authors have to develop certain typical characteristics which show the belonging of their books to the particular genre. These shared features seem to be the key to the success, because they are expected and even desired by the readers who purchase genre fiction, and one evident consequence of this fact is that authors usually put "more emphasis on these shared elements than on an individual story or the identity of the author" (ibid). It appears like a mutual understanding or contract between authors and readers which is based on particular features and expectations: authors somehow guarantee the presence of certain elements and readers somehow promise to purchase their books exactly for this reason. The factor of readers' expectations and their fulfilment is even more evident when looking at series of books written by the same author, because the fact that they are written by the same author and belong to the same series of books even increases the probability of typical elements, and consequently, if a reader enjoyed the first book, they will most likely also enjoy the following ones (Gosling, *sig* 2-4).

One element readers apparently expect from the genre of the SST is that it is predictable insofar as it has to address some of the major concerns of their readers, which are almost certainly highly connected to the age group they belong to, namely that of adolescents. Since the age group and its particular concerns seem to be that important, writers of the classic SST have found a particularly successful trick, namely "the trick of never letting characters become adults" (Mitchell 101). As a consequence, they were often trapped in the developmental phase of adolescence, and seemingly did not (have to) grow up, thus being "forever just older than the

readers, with access to some of adulthood's possibilities but none of its constraints or responsibilities" (ibid). Firstly, this narrative device enhanced readers' identification and empathy with the characters, because they found themselves in the same situation and had to deal with similar problems.[41] Secondly, the fact that they were forever trapped in these early stages of adolescence led to the obvious reality that puberty simply did not happen to the stories' characters. This could be seen as a kind of comfort for readers, since the confrontation with threatening problems like menstruation and sexuality and the connected struggles was left out, thus offering readers a safe haven to which they could escape, leaving the problems and struggles of their real lives behind (Gosling, *sig* 28).

One main concern of this particular age group is the one "about being popular and succeeding at school" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1815). This problematic issue is frankly addressed by authors by focusing on relationships between students, i.e. the struggles of newly arriving students, the search for friends and the related encounters with enemies as well as all the conflicts arising from these relationships and their eventual resolving. As Simons has noted, "the most compelling fantasy of all is that of immediate and unrestricted friendship" which was typically represented in the SST alongside with the fact that "loneliness did not exist" (172). Authors seemingly want to express the message that if behaving according to certain rules and a special code of honour, every student can find their position within school's society, they can find their own identity as well as their best friends who will always support them. This possibility of finding true friends is even increased by the fact that the search happens within the comforting walls of school, thus allowing students to freely and independently choose their friends without any prior parental approve (Mitchell 81). The absence of parents (see also chapters 2.4.1. and 2.4.2.) has always been a special appeal to readers

> because it provides a separate world where their own interests and interactions can be carried on with little adult interference. The boarding-school fantasy lets [...] [readers] imagine being free of parental control while not yet burdened by the hard work of supporting themselves. (ibid 95)

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[41] This aspect of identification and empathy was also enhanced by the fact that (main) characters of the GSST were usually female, and male in the BSST, thus adapting their gender to that of their intended audience.

Another typical issue of adolescents is their common need for probing their limits by rebelling against the established system and its rules. In real life, this might often be problematic and lead to negative consequences, but in the SST this need for rebellion is satisfyingly represented because "rebellion, breaking bounds, evading rules, and defying authority have no ill consequences" (ibid 99). Thus, by "reading an entertaining story, children can 'test the water', learn how people may react in specific situations and see what lies ahead" (Ray 348). In general, the conflicts, although being rather disastrous at the beginning, can be solved eventually, and exactly this fact of never ending in a catastrophe is comforting to readers; it presents them with the sure knowledge that the (at least fictional) world is the safe haven they want it to be, and "only by knowing this can the intended child reader relax and enjoy the description of danger" (Gosling, *sig* 9). The stories are usually also accompanied by some kind of humour or light-hearted events and actions (like games and sports, see chapter 2.4.3) in order to offer comic relief in situations of conflict, thus turning children into adoring and passionate fans of the SST.

As already mentioned earlier, one expected and desired aspect of the SST was the divergence of fiction and readers' realities, because as stated in Gosling, "[i]t must be assumed that the readers themselves desired to have access to these alternative models of reality in their imaginary life" (*sig* 30). By entering these fictional worlds as soon as opening a book, readers could escape their often rather depressing and non-satisfactory lives through "reading about youthful high spirits and successes" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1811) as well as "unorthodox teaching methods and dedication to treating each child as an individual" (ibid 1812). These devices offered a great source of pleasure and fascination for readers, because they could read about a world they had always wanted to live in.

The presentation of "alternative models of reality" is especially remarkable when examining the GSST, because at that time girls desired to be as important as boys at a time when they were still treated as being less important. They wanted to have equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal schooling, and all these desires could be fulfilled by purchasing and reading a GSST, "an easily accessible, virtual girls'

world, which could be entered simply by picking up a book" (Gosling, *sig* 38).[42] This means, however, that even in the classic SST, "alternative models of reality" already existed within the world of fiction because readers expected and desired them; just the nature of these alternative models differed from the alternative worlds which are presented in present-day fiction. This is certainly due to the changes in the 'real' world, which have altered the situation of readers and hence also their desires and expectations. In other words, the older versions of alternative fictional worlds do not any longer provide enough fascination for readers, since girls, for instance, already have gained access to the same schooling as boys as well as an officially equal status and situation. Consequently, recent authors have to provide other sources of fascination and other types of escapist fantasies have to be found, and this has probably led to the inclusion of wizards, vampires and spies into the fictional worlds, because they present enough appeal and fascination of the unknown so that readers pick up the books and devour them.

Even though the presented alternative fictional worlds fuelled readers imagination and hence their fascination with and the success of the SST, these alternative realities have often been criticised by children's book critics who usually highly appreciate realism in terms of characters, setting and action in order to determine the literary value of a children's book. This is one reason why the literary value has been denied to many SST; yet, Mitchell argues that

> [t]he genre's importance, however, is not as realistic literature but in supplying materials for fantasy. School stories use a patently unreal world to expose desires and dreams about a real world. Like some recent science-fiction utopias, they create a [...] society where [...] [children] have power over their lives, choices, and experiences. Readers could enjoy the fantasy without guilt because the stories explicitly did not present the real world's family tensions, [...], or any of the issues about sex and sexuality that remain undiscussed. (99)

Therefore, SSTs should not be seen as minor works of literature which do not possess any literary value; they should rather be seen as authors' deliberate and

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[42] According to Gosling, in particular these alternative models of female reality have led to a lot of male criticism, and hostile attitude and ridicule and parody (*sig* 31).
A good overview and more information on girls' fascination with the GSST is, for instance, provided by Mitchell (83-97).

conscious work to fulfil readers' desires[43] (Ray 353), and this chapter tried to offer some insights on the very nature of these factors contributing to the enormous success of the SST. However, it has to be stressed that this brief overview can only be very limited since the appeals of the SST, as well as the general motives for and the fascination of reading depend very much on the individual; they differ according to age, gender, external situation of the reader etc.[44] Still, what can be said is that generally, the genre of the SST offers its readers the entry to a magical and fascinating world of possibilities and opportunities, i.e. the escape from the often harsh reality into a fictional safe haven which is "both possible and desirable to its writers and readers" (Gosling, *sig* 45), and while readers have to leave this desirable world again (at the latest when having finished the book – though they can return by rereading it), together with their heroines and heroes who eventually have to grow up as well (except if authors employed the trick of non-aging), "the world of the school as such lives on for ever [sic], only gradually changing with the years" (Löfgren 45 qtd. in Gosling, *sig* 40).

Even though this chapter has dealt with the fascination and the appeal of the SST, this last part should be dedicated to the criticism and disapproval amongst adults, in order to show that the SST has not been well received by everyone; children in general are fascinated by the genre and love it but adults, however, are often concerned and not absolutely happy with it.

From its origins in the 19th century onwards, the SST always has had to deal with criticism, and sometimes, its opponents even tried to discourage their colleagues and other people from reading this "deficient" literary genre (Mitchell 93). This bad reputation of the SST is still prevalent, as can be seen in the fact that some critics think of the highly successful *Harry Potter* series "as little more than an inspired return to a regressive story-telling mode linked to an equally old-fashioned black-and-white moral universe" (Tucker 229). One main concern of adults' disapproval was the

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[43] As has already been mentioned, these desires have to be fulfilled differently nowadays, because instead of readers' desires about great educational opportunities, intelligent, independent and successful characters as well as exciting adventures out of the reach of parental influence, the new fascination seems to stem from the unreachable and unreal world of fantasy which appears to have a morbid allure on young adults.

[44] See for instance Gosling (*sig* 45) or Ray (358).

bad quality which seemed to characterise many works, especially in the heyday of the SST:

> Many school stories in the 1920s and 1930s [the heyday of GSST] were badly written with banal and carelessly constructed plots, unconvincing characters and situations, and a lack of attention to detail. It is not surprising that the genre was poorly regarded by adults who cared about what children read. There were few outlets for the criticism of children's literature and the fact that some school stories might be better than others was easily overlooked in view of the amount of material that was being published. (Ray 354)

Because of the enormous amount of literature which had to be produced in order to satisfy the demands of the market, it was claimed that many authors simply copied from their colleagues' or their own works, and hence many SSTs were hardly imaginative or original, poorly written as well as quite formulaic and often fairly chauvinist (Gillis 301).

This criticism was in particular uttered when talking about the GSST, probably due to the fact that the GSST always found itself in a problematic position since many (traditional) critics only regarded the BSST as belonging to the canon, while ignoring the GSST almost entirely (if they talked about it, they often transmitted an almost hostile attitude)[45] (Pinsent 10). Moreover, students were assigned a lot of self-responsibility and freedom; adults only had a say in terms of classroom activities, but the time outside the classroom belonged to the pupils.[46] This seeming lack of adult figures in the lives of students, together with the apparent exclusion of parents led to an ostensible substitution of the family by peers; they became the primary persons attached to their children and hence parents feared the negative influence of those friends as well as their own lack of influence on their children. Consequently, they also regarded the SST as a bad example, which might offer bad and subversive ideas to their children (Zipes, *School Stories* 1814).

Another point of criticism, which was uttered irrespective of the gender situation, was the lack of realism in the books. They were usually not concerned with protagonists that matched their readers, but rather presented a picture of upper- and middle-class

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[45] The best information on the criticism concerning the GSST can be found in Gosling's ebook *Virtual Worlds of Girls* (http://www.ju90.co.uk/start.htm).
[46] See for instance Mitchell (86), who offers more reasons for criticism in the following pages.

(white) children than that of a multicultural working class (ibid 1813). Therefore, they were often regarded as "escapist literature" (Mitchell 99), an expression which tends to be connoted negatively – a tendency which I cannot quite retrace.[47] The fact that aspects of multiculturalism were excluded has changed, though, and authors have tried to adapt their stories to the new circumstances; they now try to "provide a positive picture of one of the almost universal experiences of childhood and, perhaps most important of all, show a respect for intellectual and personal achievement, preparing readers to play a responsible role in society" (Ray 358).

The connection of imagination, fantasy, fulfilment of wishes, dreams and desires with the SST is a phenomenon which has not diminished but, according to my opinion, rather augmented in the last decade(s) and is quite characteristic for the modern school story. For this reason, the following chapter should offer some insights on the notion of fantasy and linked aspects.

3. Fantasy

Since fantasy and fantastic elements seem to play an important role within the concept of the modern school story, this chapter is dedicated to exploring the notion as such, as well as in connection with (children's) literature. In addition, the appeal and fascination of fantasy to its readers are examined.

First of all, it is evidently useful to define the term which should be discussed; however, in the case of fantasy this is rather difficult because experts cannot really agree and say for sure what fantasy actually is. The problem might be due to the fact that the word as such can be used in more than one way, with different meanings and connotations. For instance, Zipes has noted that in many European languages, such as German, the word fantasy also embraces the meaning of imagination, and hence it is obviously crucial to first elucidate the two notions and in how far they differ from each other, as well as always be critical and cautious when coming across these terms (*Matters* 3).

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[47] Mitchell seems to share my opinion that escapist tendencies as well as fantasy and imagination are not automatically to be considered as something negative (see above).

The famous critic Theodor Adorno, for instance, has also distinguished between imagination and fantasy, and I find his explanation quite useful because it is rather easily comprehensible: he distinguished between "fantasy as capacity" of the brain (i.e. imagination) and "fantasy as the result" (i.e. the product of this capacity of imagination)[48] (Zipes, *Matters* 3). In other words, imagination can be seen as the process of "creating images" (Bramwell 147), whereas fantasy is the outcome of this process, i.e. the created images. However, Zipes emphasises that "[t]he fantastic is not only a projection of fantasy/imagination but also of rational critical consciousness" (*Matters* 5). All types of art and each work of art engage at least to some extent in "fantasy, the labor of the brain and imagination" (ibid 4) because art is necessarily, or rather should be necessarily, a product of imagination, and hence a fantasy. This would practically mean that the specific genre of fantasy does not exist at all, an argument which is supported by Adorno, who declares that "there is no such thing as a genre called fantasy, nor can we categorize fantasy. To do this would be to undermine the very nature of fantasy" (ibid). Grenby somehow believes the same, although he expresses it differently. He argues that since fiction "relates that which has not taken place, all fiction should be understood as fantasy – although most critics have preferred to limit the genre to those texts depicting what *could not* (rather than *did not*) happen" (*Fantasy* 145). Since the fantastic component of art is something rather automatically given, this does not inevitably mean that all art is artistic, a fact which is pointed out by Zipes, who once again stresses the argument afore mentioned, namely that a critical attitude is also essential to fantasy:

> In fact, much of what we call fantasy is predictable schlock and tritely conventional because it lacks critical reflection and self-reflection and appeals to market conditions and audience delusions. [...] Works of fantasy art of all kinds have become depleted of cultural substance because fantasy matters too much. Fantasy has too much potential to subvert and explore the differential of freedom. (*Matters* 4)

Another important distinction which is often made when talking about fantasy is that between fantasy and science fiction. Although they "operate [...] on a similar principle" they differ from each other in their very nature; while pure fantasy products

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[48] This should also be the definition with which the two terms are used in this diploma thesis; if I talk about the power of the brain to fantasise about things which might not be real, I call this process 'imagination', and if I talk about the outcome of this process, I call it 'fantasy', as for instance in the case of 'fantasy literature', which is one of the outcomes of the imagination (i.e. of the imagination of particular people, namely the authors of these pieces of literature).

try to persuade "readers [...] [to] accept [...] them in spite of their better judgment, science fiction writers delight in the plausibility of their fantasies, daring their readers to disbelieve things which have been made to seem almost true" (Grenby, *Fantasy* 150). However, when considering this definition given in Grenby, I doubt whether a clear distinction and categorisation of individual texts can really be made, since especially in the modern fantasies, authors rather tend to present fantasy intruding into our present 'real' world than autonomous secondary worlds, and hence the fantasies 'have been made to seem almost true'.[49]

Even though "at this literary moment, there is a fascinating blend of the electronic image and the word" (Avi qtd. in Kurkjian, Livingston & Young 496), or in other words the spread of fantasy into other media like television, computer games etc. is taking place[50], the probably most important medium for the transmission is still literature. For this reason, in the following the literary tradition of fantasy and its various readerships are considered.

3.1. The genre of fantasy fiction

The tradition of fantasy fiction, like the tradition of the SST, is a long one, and Carpenter (*Fantasy* 181) argues that the first example of this genre appeared in 1844 (approximately 30 years before the appearance of Tom Brown), and that the genre reached its peak in England between the two World Wars (a tendency which he also observed for the SST). Especially nowadays, this tradition seems to reach a new peak, as can be seen in Avi's claim that "[i]f you fancy fantasy, these are halcyon days […] [with] multivolume epics that provide eager, youthful readers with multiple alternate worlds. Not just children, but adults, too" (qtd. in Kurkjian, Livingston & Young 496). He urges not to forget that "fantasy is not just magic" (ibid), and indeed, Kurkjian, Livingston & Young also state that this type of modern fantasy is not only

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[49] For a further analysis of these aspects in terms of my primary sources see chapter 4.

[50] Tucker sees this from a slightly different perspective, because he actually talks about "modern videogames on prose pages" (231), i.e. he compares the fantasy books by J.K. Rowling to videogames, by claiming that "the author successfully incorporates the fizz and excitement of the modern video game into the prose page" (ibid). Consequently, he does not talk about the spread of fantasy into other media, but rather about how the original medium has adopted and incorporated the adaptations of fantasy anew.

about magic, but also about the "use of special character types, fantastic objects, time shifts, the supernatural, imaginary worlds, and the hero's quest" (492).

3.1.1. Different types of fantasy fiction

Since the genre of fantasy literature is such a vast field, literary critics have often tried to detect at least some subgroups into which they can order the existing corpus so that a certain system can be established. Whitley, for instance, proposes two main types of fantasy, namely "fantasies of the first age" versus "fantasies of the second age" or "wisdom fantasies". The first type is concerned with "a spirit of optimism" and the "underlying confidence that things will sort themselves out in a satisfying way, which leaves the spirit of joy intact" (as is for instance shown in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), whereas the latter has a different tone and emphasis; it stresses the notions of death and struggles and bears "a measured, weighty sense of the cost of experience and loss" (as in the example of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) (Whitley 173). However, Whitley admits that a separation into these two types is not always possible because books often bear features of both types (174).

A more traditional division is probably the one offered by Susan Lehr, who mentions five different groups of fantasy fiction, namely high fantasy, realistic (or humorous) fantasy, time-slip fantasy, animal fantasy, and picture-book fantasy. A detailed account of what these different types of fantasy entail can be found in her article, because here in this context only the most important types, which are essential for the better understanding of the following analysis, are considered. For example, realistic fantasy "ostensibly occurs in our time, our world" and is usually perceived as "[n]ot exactly a fantasy, [but] not exactly real either" (Lehr n.p.). Time-slip fantasy is the classical type of fiction dedicated to travelling in time, and is repeatedly used by authors to mingle the fantastic with our 'real' world. It encourages readers to "become[…] deeply involved in 'remembering'" and is "a powerful device for luring readers into historical fiction" (Lehr n.p.).[51]

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[51] Zipes (*Fantasy* 556-557) has also engaged in discussing time-slip fantasies – in connection with children and in comparison to high fantasies – and he thinks that "[e]xploring the fabulous flexibility of time by manipulating it creates much of the wonder of fantasy literature from traditional tales to contemporary examples" (ibid 557).

Yet, the more important issue for this diploma thesis is the distinction of 'high fantasy' versus 'low fantasy'. Grenby, for instance, has defined these two types as the first "taking place in alternative worlds" and the latter "set in the world we know" (*Fantasy* 144). These two types exist rather along a continuum than forming two separate entities, and books can also combine them to various degrees. The repeated merging of high and low fantasy might be due to the fact that fantasy fiction always takes place in, if not a different world, at least a different version of the world. The worlds which are promoted in high fantasy are usually very structured and complex, and since they consist of "an expansive setting, [in which] a hero, often with supernatural or magical assistance, struggles and saves a people or a way of life", Zipes claims that they "can be compared to the epic" (*Fantasy* 555). An example for this type of fantasy would be *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. The advantage of these alternative worlds is that "[b]y stepping back from our real world and entering into secondary worlds, authors can effectively and honestly explore issues" and hence these different worlds "offer us fresh visions of what could be" (Lehr n.p.). One problematic issue that arises with these fantasy worlds, however, is pointed out by Grenby, who indicates that one sometimes gets the feeling that the alternative fantasy world was just created for the sake of the protagonist, and does not have another purpose than offering the setting and the scene for the protagonists' adventures:

> We might call this 'Ptolemaic' fantasy, the world revolving around the protagonist as Ptolemy thought the sun, stars and planets revolved around the Earth. But some fantasies are more 'Copernican', with the protagonist often disoriented, travelling through a fixed universe, as Copernicus realised the Earth revolved around the sun. (*Fantasy* 159-160)

The main difference between these two fantasy world views, according to Grenby, is the position of the protagonist: in the second model, the world can also exist without the protagonist and hence his power within the world is rather limited, while in the first model, characters who might be weak and powerless in their original situation suddenly gain immense power and raise to an important position so that it seems as if "no less than the fate of the world rests on their shoulders once they enter the fantasy" (ibid 160).[52]

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[52] He states that this "'Ptolemaic' fantasy" is for instance true in the case of Harry Potter, who suddenly has to rescue the whole (magical) world from the evil forces of Voldemort and his supporters (160).

As THE creator of the secondary or alternative world as well as THE person to define the genre of high fantasy, Lehr (n.p.) mentions J.R.R. Tolkien, and since he also promoted a rather famous maxim in terms of fantasy and secondary worlds, the next part includes an overview on Tolkien's theory.

3.1.2. Various opinions on the concept of fantasy

As the one author being crucial to the development and the definition of high fantasy, J.R.R. Tolkien proposed the "famous dictum that the author should strive to imagine a fully-formed 'Secondary World' into which the reader can enter" and this world has to remain credible at all times, with an understandable and believable structure of its own because as soon as the reader does not believe in it any longer, the fantasy is no longer working and has failed its purpose (Grenby, *Fantasy* 148).[53] Whitley thinks that this type of fantasy is probably rather the classic model of fantasy, and although it has often been criticised for being too self-important as well as escapist since "the other world is deliberately distanced from contemporary concerns and features", Whitley still believes that it can be connected with exactly those if well written. Thus, the outstanding pieces of this fiction also offer more critical and reflective aspects because "in the finest of these narratives, this isolation is used, paradoxically, to intensify a particular form of engagement with aspects of contemporary experience" (178).[54]

Another literary critic who worked on the notion of fantasy was Tzvetan Todorov, who also used the criterion of credibility proposed by Tolkien. He claimed that "[i]n successful fantasy, [...], there is almost always some attempt to understand and explain the strangeness" (Grenby, *Fantasy* 151). However, for another literary critic, namely Rosemary Jackson, fantasy does not automatically involve secondary worlds as explained by Barfield, because she argues that fantasy occupies the space between two other genres:

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[53] The success of his books proves him to be right that this type of fantasy involving secondary worlds is an appealing one; yet, Grenby emphasises that there exist types of fantasy for which this theory does not quite work, namely obviously for low fantasy "in which the magic intrudes into normal life" (*Fantasy* 150).
[54] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 3.4.

> [T]he 'fantastic' is an indeterminate space hesitating between the 'marvellous' (supernatural explanation) and the 'mimetic' (realist explanation), instead characterizing that same space as essentially subversive, one that challenges dominant ideological ideas of what is acceptable as 'real'. (qtd. in Barfield 28)

Therefore, I suggest that Todorov's theory is more adequate in terms of the analysis of some of my primary sources, since the majority of them can be found on the continuum between the "mimetic" and the "marvellous", involving supernatural and fantastic as well as realistic elements. This phenomenon of the mixture of fantastic and realistic features seems to be quite common, as for instance stated in Grenby: "the supernatural and the normal exist together in fantasy texts, in various proportions and combinations, but that there is no ratio which governs their relationship. To increase one is not to diminish the other" (Fantasy 150). Thus, the action often takes place in "our familiar world; it is the events that occur in it that require the reader or a character to hesitate between explanations as to their origins" (ibid 26). This means that since the characters navigate through a world which is familiar to the reader, fantastic elements often appear unexpectedly out of nowhere and need further explaining due to the fact that they do not occur in the readers' real world which is seemingly described at the beginning.

The reason for mentioning Tolkien and Todorov is the fact that it seems to be important to define how to look at fiction and fantasy, because this obviously has consequences on how we judge particular texts in terms of their literary value, and one should be aware of this fact before analysing a text. For instance, many critics have claimed that the Harry Potter books by Rowling are poor representatives of the fantasy genre, inferior and deficient due to the fact that they evidently lack features of Tolkien's maxim. Of course, if examining them from Tolkien's point of view, they clearly do not possess equal features; yet, this does not automatically mean that they are inferior to his works; they just belong to a different tradition of fantasy fiction. With the Harry Potter books there appears another problem though; they do not fit into Tolkien's theory, but neither do they fit neatly into Todorov's because Rowling's fictional world represents an "*expanded*, albeit unstable, *realism,* which, nonetheless*,* is impossible in terms of our *present* real-world knowledge yet does not exhibit the kind of insoluble uncertainty as to the origin of events that Todorov's definition

requires" (Barfield 27). It seems as if Rowling deliberately wanted to merge the elements of primary and secondary worlds as well as the mimetic and the marvellous in order to create her very own version of reality, and this ambitious attempt should rather be valued positively than criticised (Barfield 24-30).

3.1.3. Some characteristic elements of fantasy fiction

The classic topic of fantasy fiction, which is probably a rather universal one prevalent in most types of fiction, is the theme of good versus evil. What is, however, crucial to fantasy fiction is its usually rather special setting which distinguishes it from traditional realistic fiction.[55] Besides the big battle between good and evil forces, other topics such as "questions of faith, loyalty and death" are mentioned, but the main focus of fantasy fiction is still on "struggles against evil [which] mirror spiritual quests in the real world" and thus contribute to the "tradition of confronting religious issues in fantasy" (Zipes, *Fantasy* 554). Of course, not all pieces of fantasy literature address the issue of religion overtly; however, these texts can quite frequently be interpreted as metaphorically referring to religion because, for example, it is common for the good to eventually win over the evil, and thus "there is a quality of hope and faith in serious fantasy literature and film that offsets the mindless violence and banality and contrived exploitation that we encounter in the spectacles of everyday life" (Zipes, *Matters* 5).

These elements of hope and faith can also be found somehow in another classic aspect of the fantasy genre, namely the element of the quest combined with struggles of the hero. These can be seen as search for identity or on a more general level as mirroring conflicts of society and culture (Lehr n.p.). In Grenby's opinion, this might be a typical feature of this type of fiction because

> [f]antasy is extremely well suited to consideration of questions of identity. The journey to another world, or another time, decontextualises the protagonists, removing them from the structures that locate and bind them into a particular role within the family, the school, or the larger society. (164)

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[55] See for instance Kurkjian, Livingston & Young (492).

Hence, characters have no other choice than looking for their new identity and adopting one with which they are happy.[56] Because of this aspect of alienation from the former identity due to the contact with a new world, some critics like Whitley argue that virtually "all fantasy narratives are [...] about the process of growing up" (181), because growing up is usually connoted with the search for identity and finding of one's place within a system.

One motif which is often used in connection with a quest is that of a prophecy which has to be fulfilled. This motif helps the characters as well as the readers to structure the new and often unfamiliar fantastic world and make (at least some) sense of it because they have a clear aim and purpose. Therefore, fantasy literature is often about "coming to terms with a world one does not understand" (Grenby, *Fantasy* 165), thus reflecting on an experience which children often make when growing up and coming to terms with their identity (ibid 158-166). According to the same source, this aspect might be one of the most important features of fantasy fiction which contribute to its appeal, in particular amongst children:

> Good fantasy literature dramatizes this experience, transporting its characters into a past time or a new world where all is strange and perplexing. Perhaps this mirroring of their own daily experience helps to explain why children relish fantasy so much. Or perhaps it is because in a new world where nobody knows the rules, children are not placed at a competitive disadvantage, and consequently feel the equal of adults in a way they do not need in their real lives. […] This fantasy of empowerment is central to the appeal of fantasy writing to children. But the genre has appealed to the adults who write it surely at least in part because it can so easily be adapted to provide lessons of all kinds, moral, political, practical and psychological. (166)

3.2. The relation between fantasy and children

Since fantasy fiction has a strong connection with finding one's identity and place within a system, it is obviously strongly related to children and their fiction. This fact has also been noted by Grenby who claims that

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[56] This opinion is also supported by Zipes, who states that particularly in children's fantasy fiction, "the story is often as much about discovering one's identity, hidden talents, and weaknesses as it is about battles between good and evil" (*Fantasy* 555).

as a concept, fantasy is clearly central to any understanding of children's literature. Some have argued that fantasy is the very core of children's literature, and that children's literature did not properly exist until the imagination had been given an entirely free rein to entertain children in unreservedly fantastical books. (*Fantasy* 144)

Especially in our culture, we perceive the link between imagination (and hence its result: fantasy) and the developmental stage of childhood as something quite natural[57], and some might even talk about "the force of the imagination of childhood to illuminate reality" (Natov 132). At an early age, when play and imagination are still highly important, it almost seems as if "the life of the imagination and the daily life [are] moving in and out of our consciousness" (ibid 129), a phenomenon which apparently loses its importance when people grow up or even disappears altogether.[58] This demonstrates a slightly paradoxical situation: imagination and its products are often considered as a notion which "we must give up as we mature into adulthood, a Neverland in which only lost boys (and girls!) are allowed endlessly to defy death and the claims of experience over an ultimately triumphant optimism" (Whitley 172-173); yet "fantasy is a timeless mode" (ibid 172). As a result, imagination and fantasy probably do not get lost along the process of growing up and becoming an adult, but rather change their nature and exist in a more general sense as an equivalent to realism and the mere depicting of reality, thus complementing the art of mimesis and fulfilling the universal need of humans for imagination and fantasy (ibid 172).

In 1902, E. Nesbit came up with a new model for children's fantasy fiction, which was thereupon adopted by many other authors, namely "the intrusion of magic into the real, modern world" (Carpenter, *Fantasy* 181). A further development of this phenomenon seems to be the notion which was introduced by Alan Garner in 1960, namely "the format for a new kind of fantasy, in which present-day children encounter primeval magical forces and experience frightening (rather than comic) adventures" (ibid 182). This mingling of magic or fantasy and reality is especially common in children's fantasies, maybe first of all because "magic in children's fantasy fiction is [used] as a metaphor for maturation" (Bramwell 153). Another reason is promoted by

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[57] See, e.g. Zipes, *Fantasy* 552.
[58] This notion of the loss of imagination and fantasy has been raised by many critics. See for example Grenby (145), Natov (130), or Whitley (172).

Tucker, who mentions that "[m]agic is the most effective compensatory fantasy ever invented by humans, precisely because in real life we cannot do all those things we most wish for" and hence it expresses "the central need of humans, especially when they are young, to transcend reality in the imagination" (228). Maurice Sendak, a very popular author of children's literature, thinks that children do not only need fantasy to escape reality, but also to process their fears and problems by distancing them into fiction. Nevertheless, this distancing does not mean that children should ignore their fears and not read anything about them; on the contrary, according to Sendak, they have the need to address them implicitly through reading fiction:

> Children need to see their feelings, particularly the darkest ones, reflected in their stories. Mitigating the darkness of the fairy tales takes away their power to reassure children that they are not alone in their fearful imaginings, that these fears are shared and can be addressed. (qtd. in Natov 135)

However, especially in the beginning of the fantasy tradition, many critics distrusted fantasy fiction for children and preferred realistic fiction; they favoured it because of the assumption that realistic fiction rather manages to transmit certain values regarded as important to the lives of children and young adults and their development. Yet, also fantasy literature has always transmitted didactic aims to a certain extent, for example the fact that the good eventually triumphs over the evil, and that consequently good and moral behaviour is rewarded. In addition, it transmits the message of how one should live their life by projecting certain values and a particular way of life into a fantastic world, thus increasing children's interest in the stories[59] (Zipes, *Fantasy* 552-558).

3.3. The relation between fantasy and reality

The two entities of fantasy and reality have always been related to each other; some might consider them as antithetical terms and others might see them rather as existing on a continuum; in other words, the two concepts are in flux and interwoven. Grenby, for instance mentions this vagueness of the two concepts:

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[59] A good introduction to the seemingly antithetical notions of fantasy and didacticism can be found in Grenby (*Fantasy* 160-164).

It is often very unclear where fantasy and realism begin and end. Rather than being a weakness, this ambiguity is one of the strengths of much good fantasy writing. What seems particularly misguided is to regard fantasy and realism as mutually exclusive categories. (*Fantasy* 146)

This ambiguity might be augmented by the fact that what is "one person's fantasy is another's reality" and thus the two concepts are only "relative terms, not opposites, but different ways of looking at the same thing" (ibid 153). Hence, the 'real' world and the fantastic world are clearly connected and cannot be neatly separated from each other, or as Grenby phrases it, "the 'real' and fantasy world lie on top of each other, touching at certain points" (ibid). Usually, however, people regard reality as the more important of the two, since this is the world in which we live, and the world of fantasy can only be entered through imagination. Yet, Zipes argues that fantasy is the more significant notion: "[i]t is through fantasy that we have always sought to make sense of the world, not through reason. Reason matters, but fantasy matters more" and the argument he offers is that fantasy "gives us hope that the world can be a better place" (*Matters* 2).

Furthermore, Zipes (ibid 2-3) states that it is that difficult to distinguish between the two concepts because our 'real' lives already contain so many unbelievable and hence somehow fantastic elements, like for instance the cruel deeds people are capable of committing, or the wars and catastrophes. Consequently, he also questions the role which fantastic art plays nowadays because "[w]hen the normal is so fantastically abnormal, what role can fantastic works of art play in our lives?" (ibid 2). The role which he assigns to fantasy is that of a useful instrument with which we can "grasp, explain, alter, and comment on reality" (ibid); i.e. we use fantasy to make sense of the conflicts, the mess, and the mysteries which we encounter in our lives and have to experience every day.[60] Nevertheless, Zipes adopts a rather pessimistic view when claiming that "[i]t is commonplace today that fiction, especially science fiction and what we label fantasy in the world of art, cannot keep pace with the

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[60] This notion is supported by Grenby who thinks that fantasy, rather than being a tool to escape reality, is a tool for rewriting reality. (*Fantasy* 154)
And Kurkjian, Livingston & Young believe that fantasy is especially adequate for this task because

[t]he fantastic nature of the characters and the setting provides readers with emotional distance that gives them room to consider sensitive and important ideas more objectively than in other genres. An irony about fantasy is that despite the fanciful characters, strange imaginary world, and bizarre situations encountered, it has the power to help us better understand reality. (492)

devastating and disturbing fantastic of real occurrences, or what I call the incredible credibility of the real" (ibid). Because of this "uncanny, anxiety-provoking, bizarre, and incongruous […] everyday reality", he believes that fantasy is not needed in order to offer a counterpart to our boring reality, but rather "for spiritual regeneration and to contemplate alternatives to our harsh realities. More than titillation, we need the fantastic for resistance" (ibid 2-3).

3.4. The appeal of fantasy fiction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one appeal of fantasy and fantasy fiction is clearly its ambiguous relation to reality which helps us to better understand and reflect on our present situation by distancing ourselves from reality and relocating into fiction. Thus we can speculate and hypothesize about what-if-scenarios and come up with alternative stories, a phenomenon which is crucial to human beings who often ask exactly this question. In this way, fantasies offer "lighthearted escape and wish fulfillment to those of us who may enjoy a little break from our everyday concerns" (Kurkjian, Livingston & Young 495). Nevertheless, besides the aspects of escape and wish fulfilment, fantasies can also be enjoyed for their multiple interpretative capacities: we can interpret them from a spiritual or religious point of view, seeing the quest as an allegorical journey to finding one's identity and coming to terms with one's believes, or from a political and sociological perspective regarding fantasies as a way to satirise our present situation (ibid 492). These multiple interpretations are essential in distinguishing 'good' from 'bad' fantasy fiction, because according to Whitley, good fantasy fiction needs more than just offering "retreat from the difficulties of the world into an imaginative safe haven" (175). Rather, the author should have a sound argumentative base for their selection of contents, so that the fantastic world and the events happening there can be compared to our world, offering a different perspective. In other words, "[t]he inventiveness of fantasy becomes empty if it is merely self-serving, but rich and interesting if it allows identifiable human dilemmas to be explored from new angles" (ibid).[61]

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[61] Or as Zipes notes, the escape from reality into fantasy is probably only an illusion, since the fantastic world actually tries to deal with the real one, just on another level (*Fantasy* 552).

One main aspect which should be mentioned at this point is that, of course, these multiple possible interpretations and the various perspectives and different angles highly depend on the individual reader. Since readerships often include people from various social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds, this fact might already be enough to offer the possibility of various interpretations. As already mentioned previously (see chapter 3.2.), a somehow natural connection seems to be made between fantasy and children, probably because of children's "natural affinity for make-believe" (Zipes *Fantasy* 553); yet, the genre of fantasy fiction still seems to have a dual addressee, namely that of "the nostalgic adult and the imaginative child" (ibid 552).[62] As readerships frequently consist of children and adults (even though one of the two groups might not have been part of the intended audience), the respective interpretations and what readers gain from reading a specific text depends very much on what readers are actually looking for. For instance, reading HP might be escapist to an adult who only wants to indulge in "lighthearted escape" and forget about their real life and problems while entering the fictional world, while at the same time presenting insights into the 'real world' to younger children. Maybe fantasy fiction is that important to children because the apparent divergence from their real lives allows them to connect with themselves again; yet on a safe and sound ground, namely within fiction. Thus, by making sure that it is not their world which is portrayed, they can paradoxically access their own world and reflect on their experiences within this world from a comforting distance.

Consequently, the distrust of literary critics in fantasy fiction as merely offering "escapism from the concerns of the real world and/or regression to the easier realm of childhood fantasy" (Barfield 24) and the connected defensive stance of authors who justify their works by promoting "serious values in palatable, indirect form" (ibid 25) seems somehow obsolete, because despite the fact that a text might be intended to offer the one or the other, no author or literary critic can determine what the individual readers actually find within a text.

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[62] In the case of the modern school story, this appeal to both groups is perhaps stronger regarding children because of the very setting that is offered in these stories, but also adults might indulge in nostalgic memories of their own experiences, and thus both fantasy fiction and the modern school story share this double readership.

Therefore, the need for critical reflection of our present situation does not automatically deny the application of the principle of wish fulfilment; by accessing fantasies, individuals can live out their imagination and become the persons they want to be, i.e. for instance when reading a fantasy book, they can rather easily identify with the good and pleasant characters, thus becoming the heroes of their own imagination. This aspect of identification is fostered by the fact that frequently, fantasies "include common heroes any of us might have the capacity to become and a believable other world, a secondary world into which we can easily slip" (Lehr n.p.). Especially with the modern fantasy fiction for children this seems to be case: the principle which is repeatedly applied is that of the coexistence of the fantastic and the 'real' world; magic is mingled "with the quotidian […] [and] exists as part of the fabric of everyday life" (Zipes *Fantasy* 557). Hence, anyone could theoretically come in touch with magic and experience this fantastic other world. In addition to the new possibilities which are offered by this aspect of identification, readers also often want to identify with the characters in fiction because although these have to fight against evil and experience their own problems and struggles, their world is rather structured and usually all problems are resolved in the end – an experience which cannot always be made in real life[63] (ibid 551-552).

Because of the structured and ordered nature of fantasy which is apparently rationally justified, Avi has found that boys are particularly attracted to fantasy fiction because they love to get rational information and precise facts, and consequently fantasy fiction perfectly fits these needs because "[f]antasy works best in a context of rationality. Fantasy does not work if it is illogical" (qtd. in Kurkjian, Livingston & Young 496). However, even though fantastic worlds consist of certain structures, they still have an appeal of liberation to the reader because they can "enter worlds where normal laws and limits do not apply" (Grenby *Fantasy* 157) and thus

> [t]he strong presence of fantasy in contemporary […] culture attests not only to the desire of adults that the young continue to believe impossible things but also to the organic and enduring power of narratives of wonder to delight, challenge, and affect […] readers. (ibid 558)

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[63] See Zipes' reference to the creator of high fantasy: "J.R.R. Tolkien created a useful word for understanding the powerful hold that fantasy literature has on its readers. Tolkien's term *eucatastrophe* (or 'good ending') describes the joy and 'consolation' of the closed – and often happy – resolution of every successful fantasy" (*Fantasy* 551).

II. ANALYSIS

4. Overview on the modern school story

This second big part of my diploma thesis is a more analytical one, and illustrates the further developments of the SST by analysing three representatives of the modern school story, namely *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (HP) by J.K. Rowling, *Vampire Academy* (VA) by Richelle Mead, and *I'd tell you I love you, but then I'd have to kill you* (ILY) by Ally Carter. These three representatives are analysed not only in terms of their literary characteristics and elements (including the 'classic' elements of the SST as well as the newly added ones which are often connected to fantasy literature), but also in how far these features have possibly contributed to the highly successful adaptation of the genre to the new circumstances of the 21st century. Moreover, it tries to answer the question of which aspects help to create a bond of empathy and identification between readerships, books, and the respective characters.

Only the first of the three books has been written by a British author, and this somehow contradicts the prevalent notion of the British nature of the SST (see chapter 2.2.); yet, it also shows that the modern SST is no longer bound to old-fashioned preconceptions of the genre, and to the requisite of having to be British; it has rather acquired the freedom to redefine itself, i.e. it *can* be British, but it *does not have to be* British any longer. This is probably one of the factors which have contributed to the success of the modern SST because by adapting it to the new needs of the market (in this case to the needs of satisfying the huge market of American children and young adult readers), it could survive and flourish.

However, these three representatives do not only demonstrate the adaptation in terms of audience, but also the adaptation in terms of introducing new elements while at the same time maintaining some of the (classic) elements of the SST. Whilst they contain "old-fashioned plots, settings, and characterization, [...] [and] seem in many ways to be looking back" (Tucker 233), each of them has introduced at least one new aspect to the SST. In HP, this would clearly be the sophisticated magical world surrounding Harry, in VA the introduction of not only magic but also magical creatures, namely vampires who go to school (in contrast to HP where students are

still human, though possessing magical abilities), as well as their own kind of world, which, at some points, connects with the human world. Thus, both of these books introduce aspects and elements of fantasy fiction, which will be more closely analysed in the following sections.

In addition, both of these fictional schools also establish a type of schooling that has not been present in the classic SST of the 19th and 20th century, namely the co-educational scheme in which boys and girls attend a school together. They receive the same education and "mix together as equals. They share common rooms, although not dormitories" (Tucker 224), i.e. although they go to classes together, a kind of gender separation is still maintained and only some areas are open to both sexes, for instance there is a common area in the dorms of St. Vladimir's Academy, which is "a well-supervised lounge and study area where male and female students [...] [can] mingle, along with Moroi guests" (VA 84-85). In this quote, it can already be seen that at that particular school, a partial separation concerning students is not only made between male and female pupils, but also between Moroi and dhampirs, i.e. between living vampires and half-vampires (VA 67), and this could be interpreted as a kind of class separation. Yet, students can often sidestep the rules of gender-separation, and it seems that the breaking of this rule is especially important to the pubescent students of St. Vladimir's for whom the other gender already holds a strong attraction, because in HP, the protagonist and his best friends are only eleven years old, and hence still too young for all these issues of puberty, sexuality and growing up.

While the authors of HP and VA have adapted their books to the now prevalent notion of co-education which is probably closer to the lives of the majority of the readers, the author of ILY has kept the old-fashioned single-sex educational system. In her book, only girls attend the Gallagher Academy, and the headmistress of this school expresses one belief which has been quite common throughout the 19th and 20th century, namely that "[b]y admitting only young women, our students develop a sense of empowerment, which enables them to be highly successful" (ILY 31). This quote represents the old assumption that a school which only admits girls would enable them to develop a better sense of themselves and that they would be more successful not only at school but also in their future lives because they would not be

intimidated or disturbed by the presence of male students (see chapter 2.2.). However, although this book is quite traditional in terms of the educational scheme, it also introduces some new notions, as for instance the fact that these girls do experience puberty and the connected issues like falling in love for the first time or having a crush on a teacher; issues which were usually not addressed in the classic model of the GSST (see e.g. chapter 2.3.).

Moreover, this book is very interesting since it is not easy to define the exact genre it belongs to. Of course, it belongs to the genre of the SST; however, the classification into a subcategory is more difficult. It is not a fantasy book like the other two, because as can be clearly seen, it does not contain any kind of secondary world with magical creatures and a system of its own. There are no supernatural elements present and in that sense, it could be described as being somehow realistic, thus obviously not being fantastic. Yet, its setting and especially its characters are rather unrealistic because they show character traits, behaviour and abilities which are certainly not realistic for their age group, thus not depicting reality as such. For instance, "all [of them are] technically geniuses" (ILY 5), and for a girl going to that school it is not unusual to "spend her Saturday nights helping her best friend crack the codes that protect U.S. spy satellites" (ILY 140). Although they have a lot of high-technology-devices like "tracking device[s]" (ILY 113) or "rapelling cables" (ILY 110) which should help them in accomplishing their work as spies, the book cannot be classified into the category of science-fiction either, because the book is probably too realistic in terms of the setting, taking place in our own familiar world (although the setting of the school is slightly special), and not in a futuristic and unfamiliar version of it. Hence, when talking about ILY, the book should not be restricted to one or the other subgenre; it is simply a book which upholds old-fashioned values like single-sex-education while at the same time offering new features like puberty and technology; and therefore it can evidently be classified as a representative of the modern SST, since the mixture of old and new features is the important criterion for belonging to this genre, and not the exact nature of these new elements. [64]

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[64] Since an exact categorisation of the book is probably not possible, I will not intend to push it into any other category than simply the rather general one of the modern SST. This has also to do with the fact that all of the analysed books are products of the imaginative capacities of their authors and hence all of them are somehow fantastic in their nature (see chapter 3), as well as with Avi's claim that modern fantasy encompasses much more than simply magic (see Kurkjian, Livingston & Young 492-496).

Concerning the typical plot structure, HP and VA stick more to the traditional scheme than ILY, because both stories do not start within the school setting immediately, but begin in a pre-boarding-school-setting. In HP, Rowling adopts the traditional structure of starting to offer an account of the protagonist's life before school and only thereafter Harry goes on the actual journey to Hogwarts. Rowling even includes the typical train station scene which offers the setting for the transitional phase from one place (or even life) to the other: "Harry felt a great leap of excitement. He didn't know what he was going to – but it had to be better than what he was leaving behind" (HP 74). At the eventual arrival at school, he and his best friend Ron are very nervous, and this also points to the fact that although they are looking forward to the new place and their new life within the boarding school, they are slightly scared because it presents such a strong disruption with what they have experienced up to that point: "Harry's stomach lurched with nerves and Ron, he saw, looked pale under his freckles" (HP 83). Also Mead's characters are travelling to school after having been introduced in a chapter previous to the actual school setting. Thus they can be compared to Harry and Ron; yet, their situation is different because Rose and Lissa had been running away from school and have to return after being found by some school guardians. The fascinating thing is that their situation is almost like the new-student-situation[65], although technically they are no new students. Thus, the author cleverly applies the principle of the new student bringing turmoil and new action to the boarding school (in the case of Hogwarts, Harry is the new student who brings action to the school because of his special history), and Rose describes this quite aptly:

> [The teachers] didn't say anything and walked along almost like it was any other day. When we arrived, the reaction of my peers indicated it was anything but. They were in the middle of setting up when we entered the gym, and just like in the commons, all eyes fell on me. I couldn't decide if I felt like a rock star or a circus freak. (VA 27)

However, since Rose and Lissa have already been to the school before, they need less time than the typical new student to adapt to the system and reintegrate themselves rather quickly.

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[65] For further aspects of the new-student-situation see the texts by Pinsent (11-13), or Grenby (S*chool Story* 92), as well as chapter 2.4.2. of this thesis.

In contrast to these two books, the book by Carter starts right away with the first day of school. In this case, the protagonist is not the new student because Cammie already finds herself in the school since her mother is the headmistress and therefore they have also stayed there during the holidays. She is the one listening to the new students arriving and she can hear "the thundering feet and squeals of hello that are probably pretty standard at boarding schools everywhere on the first day after summer break (but they probably stop being standard when they take place in Portuguese and Farsi)" (ILY 4). Thus, in ILY not the protagonist is the new student bringing action to the story, but another pupil, namely Macey McHenry. In the case of the Gallagher Academy, the turmoil and the problems are even bigger than in a normal school, because at first neither Macey nor her parents should notice just how special the school is. They should believe that it is a school for rich and privileged girls, and should not detect that it is actually a school for spies. This creates the funny situation that when showing Macey around the school, Cammie and her friend play with the expected images of boarding school life. Since they have the task to invent stories in order to present their school as a normal boarding school, they rely on the common connotations and pictures people associate with the concept, thus showing that there do exist common notions that are linked to this special type of schooling. Over all, they try to invoke the negative pictures and clichés because they do not want Macey to be willing to go to their school, and therefore they talk, for instance, about school uniforms – "We even wear them during gym class" (ILY 34) – stupid rules and restrictions – "if a girl gets a perfect score on a test, she's allowed to watch one whole hour of television that week" (ibid), so that in the end, Macey utters the impression that "[t]he only people who teach at these places are freaks and geeks" (ILY 38).

The three books that have been chosen for the following analysis also show another aspect of the modern SST, namely that a very varied readership is addressed. Of course, the intended readership varies from book to book, and in the case of ILY by Carter one could probably argue that the intended audience is most likely that of the typical GSST, namely girls. This has to do with the fact that the story features an only-girls school, and typical female issues like clothes, make-up and boys are addressed. Hence, this book is possibly the one which has the most limited range of readership. The next book would be VA, which probably rather addresses girls than

boys, since the protagonist is female and also has to experience issues like falling in love with the wrong person; however, the story is set in a co-educational school which features many male characters, and therefore it could also be interesting for boys. The authors' decision to include female protagonists might have to do with the fact that most children and teenage readers are female[66], and hence they probably thought that this might enhance the empathy between reader and protagonist. Yet, Rowling chose another path and her story features a male protagonist, and this has led to a controversy amongst scholars: some of them argue that "the Potter books to date are ultimately very much boys' stories, [with] their emphasis far more on action than feeling" (Tucker 233), while others think that they have a strong appeal for boys and still do not forget to acknowledge the broad readership Harry Potter addresses. For instance, Doughty (243) claims that the broad readership of girls and boys as well as children and adult readers is evidence for the fact that gender simply does not play a role in HP, and neither does it in terms of the book's audience. Yet, I agree that HP is probably rather a boys' than a girls' book when looking at its literary elements and its connection to the classic SST because Rowling "make[s] use of such standard boys' school story elements as team sports, interhouse competitions, and escapes from the dormitory for midnight adventures" (ibid). In conclusion, one can say that the modern SST as a genre is not limited to either male or female readers, but that this rather changes from book to book.

This might have contributed to the extreme success of the modern SST, together with a frequently expressed "distinctly backward-looking quality" (Tucker 221). This nostalgic attitude might be connected to the origins of the SST as well as to the fact that some elements are still maintained in the modern version or as Tucker has phrased it, "Rowling improves upon the model of the traditional boarding school story while drawing on it at the same time" (224). He argues that today's children might want to revisit "some of the popular themes and attitudes that used to be found in their fiction" (ibid 221), at a time when fantasy and wish-fulfilment as well as the satisfying of dreams and imagination were still more important than addressing realistic problems. In a way, this seems to say that escapism is also important to children nowadays and should not be neglected, because it appears that the non-existence of contemporary social issues is one of the aspects that has contributed to

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[66] See Tucker 232-233.

the success of HP. However, an author should probably find a compromise between offering escapism and realistic problems to fully satisfy the demands of readers, and the modern SST seems to be the perfect solution for this problem. It offers old-fashioned elements that can be seen as contributing to the escapist notion, while at the same time addressing issues like puberty and growing up, thus allowing readers to look at their own problems from a different angle as well as from a safe distance. To conclude, the modern SST and its popularity might offer the solution to a serious problem, namely the seeming lack of interest of many children in fiction because as previous experiences have shown, the modern SST often manages to attract the attention of young readers (ibid 233).

5. Analysis of the primary sources

5.1. Setting

The setting which is used in the modern SST is the same as in the classic model, namely a boarding school which is usually set within an impressive old building, e.g. a castle or a mansion; although in the modern version it is not necessarily a single-sex school. Both models share the fact that the school is usually presented in contrast to the outside world and the homes and families of students, thus fulfilling the "paradigm of school as a microcosm of society" (Pinsent 18). The factor which mainly contributes to the separation of school from the outside world is its isolated setting as can be seen in VA, where the school is located "in Montana, after all, miles away from any real city" (VA 15). Thus, the school normally represents "an enclosed space from which no escape is possible" (Petzold 19) – for instance in ILY, "Gallagher Girls and town boys aren't supposed to mix" (ILY 231) and the ivy-covered school walls separate them from the outside world, forming the frontiers to a world of its own (ILY 184) – and in consequence, most of the action and the plot depend on incidents which are innate to the school (Pinsent 13-14). Another consequence of the separation between school and outside world is the potential for possible conflicts that is provided by this situation, and Carter uses this potential when writing about the conflicts between Gallagher girls and town boys. She even goes as far as inventing the concept of the "Gallagher Glare", which is "the look that people in town give [...] [the girls] whenever they figure out where [...] [they] go to school" (ILY 97), thus

explicitly showing what they think of them (namely that they are spoilt and snobbish) and demonstrating the simmering conflict between the two worlds.

Since the boarding school provides the main setting for the story, it has a huge influence on the lives of its students, but normally this is seen as something rather positive. Amongst other aspects, the boarding school often offers developmental possibilities for its students and helps them to discover themselves, free from the influence of the outside world. Consequently, students can feel safe and comfortable at school, a fact which is often emphasised in the description of the places, as for instance in the case of Hogwarts, which is not only depicted as one of "the safest place[s] in the world fer anything yeh want ter keep safe" (HP 50), but also offers students comfortable locations like "the Gryffindor common room, a cosy, round room full of squashy armchairs" (HP 96). Particularly in the case of Harry, these descriptions distinguish the school from his home, and offer him the chance to escape his miserable situation, thus turning Hogwarts into a place which "felt more like home than Privet Drive had ever done" (HP 126).

Despite the occurrence of some problems and conflicts which have to be solved by the protagonists and their friends, the boarding school is usually depicted as a great place for students, not least because of all the possibilities it holds for its students. "[T]he message that the school is a wonderful place to grow and develop is a common one" (Steege 152) and in the case of HP, this message – and the fact that students know about the opportunities their new school might offer them – is emphasised by the reaction of Harry and his fellow pupils at the first sight of the school:

> There was a loud 'Oooooohh!'. The narrow path had opened suddenly to the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers. (HP 83)

Also Cammie describes her school in a very positive light when she states that she "just loves the start of school" (ILY 3), a statement which might be heavily connected to the fact that "[t]his place never ceases to amaze [her]" (ILY 85). In VA, however, the reality is somehow different in the beginning: Rose and Lissa ran away from school because Lissa was not happy there and hence they wanted to break out from

the system and experience some freedom. The feeling of being limited in one's possibilities had yet not much to do with school itself, but rather with Lissa's special circumstances and her personal history, and therefore the initially rather negative depiction of the school as a "hellhole" (VA 23) changes after a few chapters into a more positive one. The initially negative representation which changes into a rather positive one might also be connected to an observation made by Grenby, namely that boarding schools "are authoritarian places, with strict rules and harsh discipline, but they are also places of great freedom for their pupils" (*School Story* 95). Thus, they usually demonstrate the seemingly incompatible duality of a system with rules versus liberty for its individuals.

The system of the boarding school is a rather interesting object to analyse, since it consists of so many partial aspects. The most important of these aspects is probably the hierarchy which is innate in the school system, an element which helps to create an ordered and systematic world with regulations, rules and discipline (Grenby, *Fantasy* 157). This hierarchical system is not only created through the distinction between teachers and students, but also through a particular structure within the student body.[67] In general, this body is separated into various groups of which some are more prestigious than others and thus higher on the hierarchical ladder. Although each book presents different aspects which are important in determining the place within the system, all of them have in common that the hierarchy is a "self-regulating system" and its "main weapon [is] social ostracism" (Petzold 18). Therefore, "'popularity', i.e. acceptance by the dominant peer group, constitutes a permanent temptation" (ibid 19).

In Mead's book, the hierarchy is primarily created through the introduction of a royal system; yet it is nothing stable because "in the Academy's social structure, [...], there seemed to be a lot of alphas and challenges" (VA 105) and hence after their return, Rose and Lissa have to detect in how far the hierarchy has changed in their absence and who is the one in power in order to orientate themselves within the system (VA 49).

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[67] See also Gosling, *sig* 15.

In HP, the power and position within the system seem to be based not only on class differences but primarily on personal achievements, often connected to success in sports and the gaining of points for one's school-house, because the house system and school-internal rivalries are key to the plot. It even seems that there already exists a school-internal hierarchy amongst students simply due to the separation into different houses, because as Hermione notes, belonging to the house of Gryffindor seems to be valued more than belonging to Ravenclaw, Slytherin or Hufflepuff (HP 79-80). This loyalty concerning the school-house is one of the old-fashioned elements within HP and plays a major role within the lives of students, because winning or losing the House Cup is one of their major preoccupations and one's contribution and especially the loss of points can have extremely negative consequences. This is a common understanding amongst students, and therefore "Harry felt as though the bottom had dropped out of his stomach" when he realises that he has lost 150 points for Gryffindor, because he knows that this will definitely have negative consequences for his position within the school's hierarchy and thus he is scared of "[w]hat would happen when the rest of Gryffindor found out what they'd done?" (HP 178).

In ILY, the student body is mainly structured around the age of students, because the older they get and the more knowledge and experience they have acquired, the higher they climb on the social ladder (which is in this case illustrated by them descending into a further sublevel and gaining access to more secret information[68]). Besides that, the student body of the Gallagher Academy seems to be the least hierarchical one of the three schools. This reality might be connected to their code of conduct and their depiction as a sisterhood, which inevitably leads to their valorisation of equality and community since they often have to work together in order to accomplish their missions (ILY 57).

Another aspect which is connected to the hierarchy within a school is the occurrence of bullying. This problem has not lost its validity and is still addressed in the modern SST, for instance when Neville is afraid of Malfoy, yet he does not want to report him because he does not want to get into more troubles (HP 160). Also vampires seem to be prone to such behaviour, as Rose has to observe:

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[68] See, for instance, ILY 16.

> I got to see royal power in action. A few guys – with giggling, watching girls – were messing with a gangly-looking Moroi. I didn't know him very well, but I knew he was poor and certainly not royal. A couple of his tormentors were air-magic users, and they'd blown the papers off his desk and were pushing them around the room on currents of air while the guy tried to catch them. (VA 70)

Her reaction to this incident is rather unusual though, because she does not come to the help of the victim, she simply "give[s] them a look of disgust" (ibid) when passing them. A similar reaction is displayed by Cammie, when one of her schoolmates gets bullied by some town boys, because she stays hidden and only observes what is happening, a reaction which is not welcomed by her friends who almost despise her for her incorrect behaviour (ILY 231-235). This behaviour of Rose and Cammie is very unusual for a protagonist, because the normal reaction would be like the one shown by Harry, who is even willing to break some rules in order to defend the honour of his bullied friend Neville (HP 110). In ILY, there are no scenes of bullying between the students of the Gallagher Academy, because the only act of bullying emanates from some town-boys. This lack of bullying amongst its students might be another hint at the unimportance of a hierarchical structure for that school and stresses the relative equality amongst its students.

Another characteristic element of the school system is its representation as a place of gossip. Rumours and gossip, whether based on evidence or not, play a major role within each of the three schools and for Dumbledore this seems to be something inevitable: "What happened down in the dungeons [...] is a complete secret, so, naturally, the whole school knows" (HP 214). Also Cammie states that particularly in the beginning of school, many rumours about what has happened in the vacations are uttered, and sometimes "it was almost a full-time job keeping rumors separated from facts" (ILY 52). She also thinks that this aspect is one which connects the extraordinary students of the Gallagher Academy to normal students in an ordinary school, thus probably enhancing the possibility for readers' empathy with the characters (ILY 14). In VA, Mead shows how rumours and gossip can influence the school structure and the individuals' lives and reputations; individual students can become "a nonstop source of whispers and laughter" (VA 213) and might be constrained in their attempts to socialise as well as in the process of finding their

place within the school, and they have almost no chance to correct the situation since no one seems to be interested in the truth; rumours appears to provide a more interesting source. In the case of Rose, the rumours of her being a blood whore can only be stopped through the help of one of her best friends, Mason, who threatens the students involved in the rumours to tell the truth, thus rehabilitating Rose's reputation and status (VA 270-275).

As already mentioned above, one element contributing to the hierarchical system are students' achievements in sports, i.e. that belonging to a team, being good at physical activities and being able to compete with others and defeat them form the basis of a student's position within the system and determine (at least partly) their reputation. Especially in HP, the wizard sport 'Quidditch' plays an important role and Doughty claims that "Harry is [highly] invested in his identity as a successful player" (251) because playing for the team and winning points for one's house is a privilege for each student and hence Harry wants to fulfil the expectations and hopes set into him. The role of 'Quidditch' can be easily compared to that of rugby and other typical sports in the classic SST, and although it is a magical sport, Rowling includes many characteristic components of sports, like the wish for fairness, special team robes or a sports commentator (HP 135-138). However, the presence of an "extreme valorisation of sport and sports stars is [often] criticized in the Potter books" (ibid), because many critics believe that this should not be the only source from which students gain their self-esteem and confidence.

Even though sports might play the most important role in HP, this element is also mentioned in the other two books because in these, a good physical shape is important for the protagonists in order to be able to fulfil their various jobs successfully. Cammie wants to become a spy and hence she has to be able to defeat terrorists or jump from buildings, and therefore she and her schoolmates learn for instance special martial arts and defence techniques in their Protection and Enforcement classes. Like Cammie, Rose also has to be in her best physical shape because as a dhampir, her natural determination is to become a guardian for a Moroi, protect the Moroi's life and fight against the evil Strigoi. Consequently, novice practices and sports constitute a major part of her education as well as of the book, and many pages are dedicated to detailed descriptions of practice-activities.

As can clearly be seen, the classic element of sports is integrated into the modern SST setting by making it more interesting and attractive for the audience of the 21th century; in the case of HP, this is achieved through the invention of a new, magical sport, and in the other two books the type of sport as well as the purpose of all the physical activities (for the extraordinary future professions of the protagonists) convert it into an entertaining element of the modern SST.

The buildings in which the boarding schools of the modern SST are located are, like in the older version, often historical buildings with a medieval or even gothic touch, surrounded by overgrown and mystic forests. In HP, the author introduces an old and very impressive castle (with cold and creepy dungeons), and in the beginning, Harry and his friends are bewildered by the setting: "The stone walls were lit with flaming torches [...], the ceiling was too high to make out, and a magnificent marble staircase facing them led to the upper floors" (HP 85). In ILY, Cammie and her friends do not attend a boarding school within a castle, but the setting is still rather medieval, namely a mansion with "stone walls", "heavy tapestries and great fireplaces" (ILY 119-120). In addition, the fact that the characters keep "wandering around the mansion, discovering hidden compartments and secret passageways that are at least a hundred years old and haven't seen a good dusting in about that long" (ILY 8) adds to the gothic impression of the place.

According to my opinion, the selection of such settings is possibly related to the concept of tradition, which seems to be important to students and their society and is probably already implied by the existence of such an old and nostalgically connoted location. For instance in ILY, Cammie says, "[W]e've been around for more than a hundred years" (2), and while stressing the tradition of the institution she is attending, she includes at the same time the aspect of identification with the school, which can be seen in the use of the personal pronoun 'we'. She identifies with the school and sees it as being constituted by the sum of its pupils, since a school (and thus the tradition of a school) cannot exist without its pupils. Whilst the importance of tradition is only implicitly given in this book, the main character of VA stresses its significance for the school as well as the society when stating that

[the school] probably looked the same, sprawling and gothic. The Moroi were big on tradition; nothing ever changed with them. This school wasn't as old as the ones back in Europe, but it had been built in the same style. The buildings boasted elaborate, almost churchlike architecture, with high peaks and stone carvings. Wrought iron gates enclosed small gardens and doorways here and there. After living on a college campus, I had a new appreciation for just how much this place resembled a university more than a typical high school. (VA 14-15)

In addition, this quote clearly shows that tradition as well as prestige have to do with the design and setting of the boarding school, and hence all the little details of its appearance are very important and add to its nostalgic and gothic image.

There might be many reasons that lead to an author's decision of including such a setting into the modern SST, and Tucker describes one main reason which is connected to the, according to him, "most determinedly old-fashioned aspect of these stories" (222). For him, these old-fashioned and rather fashionable locations – which are usually only open to a certain elite – trigger connotations of social exclusivity, privileges and snobbery. By including them into the modern SST, authors acknowledge the existence of a popular childhood wish, namely that of partaking in "a different and exclusive form of education for a privileged few" (ibid 223), thus becoming a member of a unique and extraordinary set of pupils. This wish possibly points to the previously quite common belief that a boarding school offered children the best place for their existence and process of growing up, and while reading a modern SST, the setting helps children to satisfy their escapist demands and dreams by entering these great and nostalgically connoted places (Tucker 222-223).

Gosling adds two other possible reason on the authors' side for choosing a medieval and gothic building as the setting for the (modern) SST, namely firstly, that besides the escapism which is offered by such a setting,

> [t]he frequency with which schools occupy historical settings, generally in castles or manor houses, provides the fictional schools with romance and the promise of adventure, while stressing the isolation of the imaginary world. (*sig* 6)

In other words, the possibilities for action and adventure within the plot, which are automatically implied by this type of setting, are too good to be ignored. Secondly,

the medieval and gothic settings commonly provide a spatial isolation of the fictional schools and their inhabitants by being set in remote locations, and through the inclusion of these old buildings, authors somehow also provide a temporal isolation from the outside world because they catapult readers into connotations of former times and thus often 'force' readers to think about the past. Consequently, the schools which are featured in modern SSTs are frequently spatially as well as temporally set apart from the outside world and provide readers with a refugee from their everyday lives (Gosling, *sig* 6-8).

By excluding any type of modernisation of the setting in terms of technology and modern pastimes for students, it appears that Rowling is the one to most tightly hold on to the connotations of nostalgia. Instead of spending their time on computers and videogames, pupils play for instance wizard chess. However, this exclusion of technology and modern pastimes is not given in the other two books, because Carter and Mead offer a combination of old and new aspects, probably to bring their schools closer to the experiences and world of their respective readerships. As a spy, technology is somehow essential for surviving, and therefore it is evidently present in ILY, for example in the rather common form of "[b]asic comms units" (ILY 64) or "flickering computer screens" (ILY 86), but also in the more extravagant form of a "prototype for a new Morse code auto-translator" (ILY 142). The contrast between the old-fashioned setting and the modern technology becomes quite eminent when Cammie and her friends descend to the next sublevel, where they encounter a high-tech-classroom which stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the mansion (ILY 17). Like Carter, Mead also includes this duality between old and new, gothic building and modern technology, which can be seen in the following quote:

> Despite the looming stone walls, fancy statues, and turrets in the outsides of the buildings, the Academy's insides were quite modern. We had Wi-Fi, fluorescent lights, and just about anything else technological you could imagine. (VA 142-143)

In my opinion, this deliberate decision to set the modern SST in these old-fashioned buildings provides the story with a lot of tension, namely through the combination of old, nostalgic values which are implied through the setting, and the new and modern values connected not only to the schools' modern students, but also to the

contemporary readership of these texts. Old and new values and points of view often collide, and this propels the plot and the action within the books. This kind of friction is probably best expressed by Mead, who shows that the school functions as a microcosm and mirror for the macrocosm of the outside world, and hence it reflects societal problems and changes which are due to the impact the new has on the old and vice versa:

> Here at the Academy, past and present warred with each other. It might have its beautiful old walls and gardens, but inside, modern things were creeping in. People didn't know how to handle that. It was just like the Moroi themselves. Their archaic royal families still held the power on the surface, but people were growing discontent. Dhampirs who wanted more to their lives. Moroi like Christian who wanted to fight the Strigoi. The royals still clung to their traditions, still touted their power over everyone else, just as the Academy's elaborate iron gates put on a show of tradition and invincibility. (VA 163-164)

As can probably be inferred from the previous analysis, boarding schools are normally presented as places with an extraordinary and fantastic nature, rather than simply depicting the often boring reality of school life. The main reason behind this decision might be that although the stories should offer some links to the realities of their readers so that they can identify with the characters and feel empathy with them, the stories should still remain interesting and attract the readers' attention through the inclusion of unfamiliar elements.

First of all, this is of course realised through the setting. For instance, Rowling depicts Hogwarts as "a strange and splendid place" (HP 87) whose existence could not even have been imagined by the protagonist. This extraordinary location includes, for example, hundred and forty-two different staircases, hidden doors, walking coats of armour or people in portraits who keep visiting each other (HP 98). The invention of this fantastic school leads to the fact that readers are drawn into it; they cannot escape the fascination that radiates from such a wonderful world. Also Carter invents a very fascinating and rather unrealistic setting when describing the Gallagher Academy; she portrays the possibilities of sliding down a secret tube, pressing some secret buttons to enter hidden staircases, rooms and tunnels (ILY 145), as well as for instance a driveway which is "equipped with laser beams that read tire treads and sensors that check for explosives, and one entire section that can open up and

swallow a truck whole" (ILY 2). These astonishing settings can, however, not be detected from outside, and people from the outside world have no clue about the true and special nature of the boarding school because only by entering the world of the boarding school, one can discover all its marvellous and fantastic features. When not being part of the system, one can only dream about these things and regard them as a myth or product of imagination, but one usually does not believe in its existence. This once again stresses the differentiation between inside and outside world, and Cammie describes this duality:

> if you don't have that kind of clearance, then you probably think we're just an urban spy myth – like yet packs and invisibility suits – and you drive by our ivy-covered walls, look at our gorgeous mansion and manicured grounds, and assume, like everyone else, that the Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women is just a snooty boarding school for bored heiresses with no place else to go. (ILY 2)

The main element being responsible for the extraordinary nature of the fictional boarding schools is yet not the respective setting, but the respective unique student body which makes the school what it is, namely an extraordinary and fabulous place to be. This truth is for example shown when the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy argues that "this is not an ordinary school – it can't be with such exceptional students" (ILY 276). In addition, Cammie claims that "if there's one thing we're not, it's normal" (ILY 63), and this is most likely true for the students of all three examples which are analysed in this thesis. For this reason, the next chapters are dedicated to examining the student characters – including protagonists, their friends and their enemies – as well as some of the most important adult figures which appear in the stories.

5.2. Students

As already mentioned above, the students of all three schools are somehow special and unique, while at the same time bearing some universal features of adolescence, which are easily recognised by readers. For instance, in VA, Mead creates a school for different kinds of vampires, and humans only appear on the periphery of the story. Yet, although the students are not human, they share the developmental phase of adolescence with their readership, and hence they encounter similar problems like

jealousy, fights, bullying, falling in love or simply coming of age, mixed together with unusual problems like a psychic bond or fighting against evil forces. This mixture of familiar and unfamiliar elements, or in Natov's words the "extraordinariness of the ordinary", seems to be key to solving the dilemma with which each author has to deal, namely that of finding the balance between attracting the attention of readers by offering unfamiliar and fabulous elements, while at the same time leaving enough space for identification and empathy by offering the right amount of familiar aspects.

One element that wizards, vampires and spies share with their human readers is the substitution of family which occurs at the boarding school. This is not only a classic element of the SST, but also seems to be quite important for adolescents, for whom their friends are suddenly more important than their parents. In the boarding school setting, this replacement of parents and family by peers is stressed by the fact that the immediate world of students is usually parent-free, and therefore the intense relationships between students somehow compensate this lack. The importance of this concept is emphasised by the fact that Professor McGonagall addresses this issue immediately after the arrival of the new students to Hogwarts, when she tells them, "your house will be something like your family within Hogwarts" (HP 85). In the case of Rose, this situation is even more extreme since "Moroi and dhampirs start school pretty young, and the Academy had essentially taken over as [...] [her] parent by the time [...] [she] was four" (VA 80).

Also Cammie addresses the concept of the family which is provided by the school and the other students in the very beginning, when she states: "I was going to go from being an only child to one of a hundred sisters" (ILY 3). The family aspect is here stressed by the choice of words, because she even calls her peers "sisters", thus making clear that they are like her family. Moreover, this quote points to another interesting aspect of boarding school, namely that of never being alone when staying in a boarding school. This might also be a rather fascinating aspect for readers and possibly demonstrates a wish which might be familiar to many of them, namely that they can spend all their time with their friends and will never be alone or bored. However, Cammie also points out some negative aspects this situation might bring with it, namely that she is always surrounded by the other girls, and thus she

sometimes feels trapped, because normally she cannot have any secrets or even some time just for herself (ILY 91).

Furthermore, she illustrates the uniformity of the student body quite accurately when saying: "I followed my friend up the stairs, and I got lost in a sea of girls who were dressed like me, and were trained like I was, and who were entrenched in my same world" (ILY 284). Since the student body of a boarding school is often presented as a homogeneous mass of students, one typical fear of the individuals, especially of newly arriving students, is the fear of not fitting in. By addressing this issue, authors automatically address their readers' concerns and worries, because in the age of adolescence, assimilation with others and being accepted is one of the main sources for anxiety and distress. Thus, readers can safely observe the problem from another perspective; yet, they see that their fears are acknowledged and that they are not ignored. For instance, before arriving at his future school, Harry afflicts himself with thinking about that issue, and Natov thinks that

> [a] burning question for Harry, who has never fit in, not at home, not at 'Muggle' school, who has never had the chance to experience friendship – loyalty, competition, finding a place among peers – is how will he succeed in this home away from home, particularly when he has never been at home at home? (133)

He does not want to make a fool out of himself in front of his peers (HP 107), and hence he is very nervous before his arrival at school; yet, at the same time very comforted when he realises that his peers are not superior to him and have to deal with similar issues (HP 100). Actually, by entering the boarding school, he is given a second chance to experience what family life and a safe and comforting environment can be like, and consequently he feels more welcome and accepted at school than at home.

In Cammie's case it is interesting to see that she has no fears of whether she fits in at school or not, maybe due to the fact that she has already been part of that 'family' for such a long time. However, she also has to deal with this problem, even though on another level, because her fear of not fitting in is addressed in the direction of Josh's world, i.e. the outside world surrounding the academy, because when being there she notices that "a spy would never belong there" (ILY 108).

Like Harry, Rose and Lissa are also preoccupied with their status at school, and the concern about one's position within the school's hierarchy is examined from various angles. For instance, Rose fears for her best friend's reputation and that her relationship and the secret meetings with Christian will have negative consequences so that she tells her, "Well, you can't do it again. If people find out you're hanging out with him, they'll crucify you" (VA 69). Also their enemy Mia is concerned with her position in the system, and she "desperately [...] [tries] to fit in with the school elite" (VA 86). Even allegedly happy outsiders like Lissa's cousin Natalie try to grab each chance for becoming popular, which might indicate that they are actually not that content with their position on the periphery of the system (VA 102). An extreme case is Lissa's fear of not fitting in because of being different; she does not possess the same magical abilities as her peers and hence she is under the constant pressure of desperately wanting to know that she is still 'normal' and no 'freak':

> 'Why is this happening?' she cried into her pillow. 'Why am I a freak?'
> 'You aren't a freak.'
> 'No one else has this happen to them. No one else does magic like I can.'
> (VA 162)

The whole homogeneous mass of the student body is made up by so many different individuals, that one SST can, of course, not focus on all of them. For this reason, authors "often focus on friendships within a fairly small subgroup of pupils" (Pinsent 14), usually by choosing individuals who are remarkably different from the homogeneous rest, because they are either different due to external circumstances like their family situation, or internal circumstances like their personality or special abilities. Thus, the focus of the following sections lies on the examination of the protagonists and their closest friends as well as their enemies, or in other words on the few students which are highlighted within the uniformity of the student body.

5.2.1. Protagonists

The interesting fact regarding the main characters is that they always find themselves in extraordinary and special positions within the school. Fascinatingly, this

extraordinariness of the protagonists is shown on two levels[69]: firstly, they are already special by belonging to the unique student body attending the extraordinary boarding school; and secondly, they are also special compared to the rest of the students and this specialness is due to various factors.

Harry Potter is special because of his personal history, and the external events that have influenced his childhood so dramatically. This extraordinary future position of his is already forecast by Rowling in the first chapter of the book: "He'll be famous – a legend – I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter Day in future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name!" (HP 15). This quote does not only emphasise Harry's unusual situation, but also offers a nice reference to the book itself and the phenomenon of the success and popularity of Harry within the world of children's literature. However, Harry is not only famous because of external events, he also becomes popular at school because of being the youngest house-player for his Quidditch team in over a century (HP 113), and so he gets a broomstick although this is normally denied to first-years. Thus, he is somehow presented by contrasting him with the rest of the more ordinary students. His extraordinary status is also shown when considering his physical aspect; for instance, he has "a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning" (HP 17) on his forehead, which already separates him visibly from the rest of the students, or as Doughty has observed, "Harry is forever set apart by his scar, identified as the one who defied Voldemort" (252). Moreover, this scar also separates him invisibly from others, because it indicates approaching danger (HP 192), something only Harry can feel, and this phenomenon distinguishes him from his friends; not only is he the only one to have these feelings, but by experiencing them, he finds himself in a heightened and more intense emotional state:

> Maybe it was because they hadn't seen what Harry had seen in the Forest, or because they didn't have scars burning on their foreheads, but Ron and Hermione didn't seem as worried about the Stone as Harry. The idea of Voldemort certainly scared them, but he didn't keep visiting them in dreams. (HP 191)

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[69] See also the text by Tucker.

Like Harry, Cammie is also special because of attending a special school, an awareness which is often mentioned by her when she talks about the two conflicting concepts of 'girl versus spy'. She often reveals that when acting in her role as a girl, she would choose option one, while when acting in her role as a spy, she would choose option two, and this opposition of seemingly incompatible values, emotions and opinions is often rather problematic for her. For instance, she states that in one occasion, "the girl in [...] [her] wanted to scream, but the spy in [...] [her] just smiled" (ILY 194-195), which clearly illustrates her inner state of being torn between these two roles. Furthermore, she is in a special position within the school because her mother is the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy. For this reason, she does not only know more secrets about the academy than any of the other girls (ILY 16), but her fellow students consider her as an extraordinary student, which can be annoying for her, e.g. when others think that she is in a privileged situation and probably favoured over others:

> Times like this are when it's no fun being the headmistress's daughter, because A) it's totally annoying when people think I'm in a loop I'm not in, and B) people always assume that I'm in a partnership with the staff, which really I'm not. [...] Whenever school is in session, I'm just another Gallagher Girl (except for being the girl to whom the aforementioned A and B apply). (ILY 7)

Finally, also Rose is in an unusual situation within St. Vladimir's. First of all, she had been running away, which has already turned her into a legend before she returns to school. When being at school, she is furthermore special because of being one of the few girls among all the male novices (actually, Mead does not mention any other female novice), because "[f]ew dhampir girls became guardians anymore" (VA 24). This special position of hers is not an easy one to bear, because it is linked to many duties, as is explained to her by her mentor Dimitri: "If you were human or Moroi, you could have fun. You could do things other girls could" (VA 123). Since she is neither human nor Moroi, she is limited by her natural position within the system and cannot act like others. On top, she is distinguished from all the other guardians by having a special relationship with the Moroi she has to protect: not only are they best friends, but they also share a psychic bond with each other, which makes both of them remarkable. Like Cammie, Rose notices that being in an extraordinary position is not always easy:

> [F]or an instant, I wished I could have a normal life and a normal best friend. Immediately, I cast that thought out. No one was normal, not really. And I'd never have a better friend than Lissa ... but man, it was so hard sometimes. (VA 164-165)

One feature which is linked to the extraordinariness of the protagonist, and which is shared by all three of them, is the common urge of finding an explanation and the feeling of having to justify this specialness. Usually, the protagonists do not only want to be special because of external circumstances but because of their own achievements; they want to prove that they are worth being regarded as exceptional. This method is also useful to defeat the frequent prejudices attached to their situations (Manners Smith 76). Harry, for instance, defends "his reputation with acts of daring and courage" (Tucker 227), and when he wins a very important Quidditch game, he feels happier than he has ever felt in his whole live, because he has "really done something to be proud of now – no one could say he was just famous for his name any more" (HP 165). Also Rose wants to prove herself and show that she is worth of all the expectations that are set into her; she wants to demonstrate that she can live up to the exceptional position she has been automatically given (VA 100). At first, Cammie too feels somehow guilty about her special state, because she is the only one to be able to see her mother every day, while all her peers cannot see their parents for long periods of time. However, after some time she comes to terms with her situation because she justifies this special state to herself; she thinks that because of having lost her dad, as well as because of having to experience all the problems connected to being the daughter of the headmistress, she deserves this privilege (ILY 45).

One of the main reasons for putting the main characters into a special position might be that this state helps to trigger the attraction of the books for their readers as well as to capture their attention. By presenting the fulfilment of a common childhood wish, namely that every child wants to be something special and that all of them want to be recognised as being unique and extraordinary, the books definitely hold some fascination for their readers[70]. For example, Tucker has noted that this is "a most agreeable fantasy: many [...] children's books have capitalized on the way young

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[70] An interesting and detailed discussion of this notion, as well as its further implications, can be found in Natov (125-127).

readers like to share the imaginary experience of feeling exclusively different from others" (227). By reading about all these exceptional child characters, young readers can escape their own state of being ordinary, and they willingly embrace the possibility of identifying with someone that special (ibid); a reality which "emphasizes the pre-eminence of the imagination of childhood and the need for children to question and dream" (Natov 127). Just like the protagonist, who "becomes the child-hero of his own story" (ibid 126), children become the heroes and heroines of their own imagination. This imagination is particularly fuelled in the case of Harry Potter, because his innocent state of "not knowing he was special, not knowing he was famous" (HP 18) triggers the thought that technically, everyone could become that special too; maybe the respective person just does not know it yet, but will be thrown into an exceptional position all of a sudden[71], and this idea helps to satisfy the common wish of humans, especially children, to experience the "extraordinariness of the ordinary"[72].

Yet, in the whole debate on how special and exceptional the protagonists are, one should not forget that they normally represent not only the concept of extraordinariness, but also that of ordinariness. Usually, they are represented as one among many, which is easily achieved through the fact that they go to school and are hence individual students belonging to the sum of students (Natov 130-131). For instance, Harry Potter is the youngest seeker in over a century, which turns him into an exception, yet he is still part of the whole Gryffindor team, and this fact "integrates him into the community of the house" (Doughty 252) and offers him an "entrée [...] into a brotherhood" (ibid 251). Also his name is a "[n]asty, common" one, as noted by Mrs Dursley (HP 11) and even regarding his looks he does not exceed the normal standard, or as argued by Tucker, he is "an easy hero of all ages to identify with [...] [because] he is no film star" (227).

When Rose returns to school, the headmistress points to her ordinariness and the fact that she is nothing special but just one amongst many, when stating that "Miss Hathaway is expendable" (VA 21), and Rose herself even wishes for this state of normality and ordinariness when she suggests to Lissa to "[c]oast through the

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[71] See also Tucker's comparison with Cinderella (226-227).
[72] This term has been coined by Natov, who does not only discuss it throughout his article, but also stresses the expression by including it into his title.

middle" (VA 55). Likewise, Cammie expresses her wish for ordinariness when stating that "[o]n the streets of Roseville I was just a regular girl, and it felt so good" (ILY 77). Moreover, she calls herself "the girl next door" (ILY 72) and her nickname is "Cammie the Chameleon" (ILY 1), which evidently points to her normal physical appearance and often leads to her being invisible and not being noticed. This phenomenon might also be one of the factors triggering readers' empathy and identification, because especially during adolescence, many children might feel invisible; they feel that they are on their own, "unacknowledged, unappreciated, unseen and unheard, up against an unfair parent, and by extension, an unfair world" (Natov 125) and hence they probably appreciate the fact that the protagonist has to experience the same conditions. Consequently, all these normal and ordinary aspects of the main characters are probably introduced so that readers can easily identify with them; it simply brings the protagonists closer to the world and experiences of the readership and especially the little flaws and shortcomings make them more likeable than characters who were exceptional in all realms and would constantly exceed the achievements and abilities of their readers. One common shortcoming of heroes and heroines is the fact that they sometimes act recklessly without thinking too much about their actions, and hence their behaviour is almost stupid, although it might be connected to the value of bravery at the same time. This is expressed by Rowling (HP 130), as well as by Mead, who also connects the concepts of bravery together with recklessness and stupidity when talking about Rose (VA 14).

In order to increase the empathy readers might feel concerning the main characters, authors usually incorporate the typical problems of coming of age like finding one's identity, which is related to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and worries. As mentioned by Petzold, "the regular school story concentrates on an individual whose attachments change as he undergoes moral maturation or deterioriation [sic]" (20). For instance, Harry Potter's school-related story starts with his eleventh birthday, and according to Natov, this is an age at which children start to come into consciousness, they start with the search of finding their own true nature (125). In Harry's case, this search for identity is especially interesting because all of a sudden he is confronted with a truth that turns his world upside down: when Hagrid tells him on his eleventh birthday that he is a wizard, Harry has to rethink and restructure all his hitherto existing experiences, which leaves Hagrid astonished so that he exclaims

unbelievingly, "Yeh don' know what yeh *are*?" (HP 42), and declares this as something unusual, though it appears to be a quite normal process for every child. Rowling also connects the concept of coming of age with the typical phenomenon of not trusting oneself and one's abilities. When Hagrid tells Harry that he is a wizard, he does not want to believe this at first; he does not have enough self-esteem to be able to see himself as something that special: "Harry, instead of feeling pleased and proud, felt quite sure there had been a horrible mistake. A wizard? Him? How could he possibly be?" (HP 47). His insecurity is enhanced by the fact that he enters a whole new world about which he does not possess any knowledge, as well as the awareness that everyone thinks that he has to be special and thus expects great achievements from him. He feels a lot of pressure but Hagrid manages to console him and eventually, Harry is able to overcome his insecurities and become a more mature version of himself (HP 66).

However, Harry is not the only one to experience these negative feelings because also Cammie and Rose do not trust themselves at first. Cammie for instance shows her low self-esteem when she is wondering why Josh has chosen her to be his girlfriend when there exist so many far more beautiful girls than her (ILY 100), and she thinks that she does not play in the same league as he does (ILY 128). In addition, she reveals the typical shyness of teenagers to speak in public (ILY 30), and all these shortcomings contribute to the identification process of readers; they can better connect and sympathise with her.

Rose's insecurity does not have to do with boys, but rather with her best friend and the blind trust that Lissa has in her. Rose does not know for sure whether she is worth that kind of trust and whether she can fulfil all the expectations set in her (VA 6). She first has to trust herself before she can value the absolute confidence of her friend, and this happens over all through the guidance of her mentor Dimitri, who helps her to understand her powers and how to use them sensibly[73].

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[73] For a similar discussion on Harry Potter, see Natov 133.

5.2.2. Friends

According to Zipes, "virtually all school stories focus on the intense peer relationships that children form at school" (*School Stories* 1815) and stress the importance of these relationships for the development and maturation of the individual. Usually, the protagonist has at least one sidekick who supports them in their actions, and functions at the same time as a device to stress the achievements and abilities of the main character because normally the sidekick does not perform as well as the protagonist, thus emphasising the importance of the latter.

However, one principle which is often applied in literature is the so called "rule of three" (Manners Smith 74), i.e. that the main peer group of the protagonist consists of three people because this leaves the author with more possibilities for action and drama, conflicts and entanglements, than when confronted with only two characters. This rule of three can be seen in Carter's book, where Cammie, Bex and Liz form a set of friends, as well as in Rowling's book. The interesting fact in HP is that not only the protagonist is part of a set of three friends – namely Harry, Ron and Hermione – but also his antagonist Malfoy has two best friends, Crabbe and Goyle. The only achievement on Rowling's side is that she adds a girl to the first group of three, and thereby she innovates and reforms her – in its essence rather male – SST (ibid 75). In Mead's book, however, the rule of three does not seem to be applied, since Rose and Lissa have such an intense friendship that there appears to be no space for a third person. Although both of them have other friends (Lissa starts dating Christian and has her cousin Natalie, who wants to be friends with them, and Rose has some other male friends among the novices like Mason or Eddie), none of these has the same status as the friends in the other two books. Rose is the character who tells the story from her perspective, and in addition she is the more active of the two friends:

> I was the one who took action, who made sure things happened – sometimes recklessly so. She [Lissa] was the more reasonable one, the one who thought things out and researched them extensively before acting. (VA 8)

Yet, even though Lissa is the more passive character, she does not appear to be the typical sidekick; she has qualities of her own which make her special, just like Rose. For instance, Lissa is a princess and has special magical abilities and since she finds

herself in extraordinary circumstances, she wants to be normal, thus expressing the typical wish of the protagonist. She dreams of their escape and the time outside the academy because "[i]t was great. No one knew who [...] [she] was. [...] [She] was just another face. Not Moroi. Not royal. Not anything" (VA 60). Consequently, the intensity of their relationship – since their time in kindergarten they have been best friends and inseparable (VA 8) – seems to imply that both of them share a rather equal status in terms of being important: Rose is important for Lissa because she protects her and helps her to cope with her depressions and special circumstances, while Lissa is also important for Rose because she has saved her life. Thus, their friendship appears to be more balanced than the relations in the other books, where there always exists one evident protagonist.

Returning to the aforementioned sets of three friends, it is quite fascinating to notice that one of the two sidekicks is always the rather typical best friend, a person who admires and supports the main character in everything they do. In the two books by Carter and Rowling these would be the roles of Ron and Bex. Yet, both authors also include a not so typical person into the circle of three; a person who would normally not be automatically associated with the protagonist and their best friend. These would be the roles of Hermione and Liz, who depict the typical image of the bookworm, thus verifying Steege's argument that heroes and heroines are usually "bright but not superlative academically, and their stories, while including classroom experiences, do not center around their winning academic honors; concern about being the best scholar is left to others" (148). Liz, for example, "had the highest score on the third-grade achievement tests *ever*" (ILY 5) and is the predestined student to ask for more homework. Her concern about being the best student is expressed by Cammie when she says that "Liz had to go by Mr. Mosckowitz's office to drop off an extra-credit essay she'd written over the summer (yeah, she's *that* girl)" (ILY 16). Interestingly, although Liz is that kind of nerd and perfectionist – she "once went to bed without flossing and couldn't sleep the entire night" (ILY 121) – she is still included into Cammie's group of three without any conflicts arising from her attitude. This might be due to the fact that they have already been friends for a few years and at the start of the story, they are already friends; in other words, the reader simply does not know whether there had existed initial quarrels between those characters before they became friends.

In contrast to those characters, the reader obviously notices the initial clash of opinions and attitudes between Harry, Ron and Hermione, because she is the typical example of a student who, at first, is not really liked by anyone. Rather, she annoys all the other students with her behaviour and she first has to learn to fit into the system of the school. At first, Harry does not like her (e.g. because "she was such a bossy know-it-all" (HP 121)), but he and Ron eventually become friends with her because Hermione finds her position within the system by changing into a better version of herself. By getting to know her better, Harry and Ron notice that there is more to her than just the annoying qualities, and that there exist various facets of her personality. As a result, after some time the primarily irritating qualities are somehow noticed differently by them; when diminished into a less extreme form, they turn into likeable eccentricities of Hermione and make her who she is, and she is even valued and liked especially because of these unusual qualities. The process of the three of them becoming friends is triggered by a typical school story scene, namely that of "[s]hared danger, often combined with life-saving [which] is a frequent and intrinsic motif in the school story, and the safest way to reconciliation and renewal of friendship" (Löfgren qtd. in Gosling, *sig* 11). In the case of Rowling's book, this impulse is given when Harry and Ron save Hermione from a mountain troll: "[F]rom that moment on, Hermione Granger became their friend. There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them" (HP 132). Another positive aspect of this life-threatening situation is that such "near-death experiences [...] provide vehicles for [...] [characters] to change" (Gosling, *sig* 12), as it is the case with Hermione, who becomes more relaxed and likeable after the troll-incident. She even dares to tell a lie to a teacher, a fact which would have been hitherto unimaginable (HP 131).

While the importance of good friends and friendship is repeatedly stressed in all three books and helps the protagonists to mature by offering them a comforting refuge, they usually have to pass their most severe tests on their own because "[t]his is a key moment of maturity; every child must at some time come to terms with the fact that adults [and friends] cannot fix everything" (Doughty 254). When being confronted with their ultimate enemies or their most difficult tasks, the protagonists have to show that they can survive on their own, thus proving that they are worthy of their special

positions: Harry has to deal with Voldemort on his own, Rose has to save her best friend, which means that she cannot count on her help in this mission, and Cammie has to stand her ground when meeting Josh for the first time: "I wished they [her friends] could go with me, but that's something every spy learns early in the game – it doesn't matter how skilled your team is, there will come a time when you have to go on alone" (ILY 144).

5.2.3. Enemies

As mentioned in the previous chapter, relationships with peers are frequently a very positive thing for the protagonist, since they support him and help him in his process of maturation and finding one's identity. Yet, one can almost always observe the contrary case as well, namely that certain relations might "have the potential to be devastating" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1814). These relations point to the concepts of peer pressure, emotional distress, brutality amongst children, and typically the concept of bullying (see also chapter 5.1.), and in modern children's literature, many authors try to show which factors have led to the fact that one student harasses others, thus trying to help their readers to at least understand that these students might not always be purely evil, but have to deal with problems of their own (Zipes, *School Stories* 1814-1815). This strategy of trying to explain the reasons behind a person's bad behaviour is, for instance, applied by Mead. In the beginning, Mia Rinaldi is depicted as a rather mean and jealous person who wants to hurt Rose and Lissa wherever she can; for example, she plants rumours about Rose in school with the intention of destroying her reputation forever, and she uses magic against Lissa. However, in the end her behaviour is kind of explained when Christian tells Lissa that Mia had been dating her older brother, who just took advantage of her and dumped her when he was not interested in her any longer: "She hates you because of him. That, and because you're royal and she's insecure around all royals, which is why she worked so hard to claw up the ranks and be their friend" (VA 258).

J.K. Rowling, however, applies another strategy of depicting Harry's enemies: in her book, Harry's enemies do not look as sweet and innocent as Mia does, but she rather

uses the principle "to look bad is to be bad"[74] (Tucker 225). Consequently, all the Slytherins, who are the 'natural enemies' of Gryffindors, look bad: "Perhaps it was Harry's imagination after all he'd heard about Slytherin, but he thought they looked an unpleasant lot" (HP 89). Especially Crabbe and Goyle, Malfoy's two sidekicks, are described as "thickset and [...] [with an] extremely mean [look]" (HP 81), and also Malfoy, with his "pale, pointed face" (HP 59) does not look especially inviting. According to Tucker, these representations of characters are rather simple and not very sophisticated ones and

> [c]haracters are on the whole two-dimensional, picked out by particular physical features plus one overriding personality trait, such as adventurousness, scholarship, or general timidity. Gender roles are stereotyped. (228)

Rowling's method of including many stereotypes (not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of personality) leads to the obvious consequence that good characters are presented as extremely good, whereas bad characters are shown as being extremely bad. She does not try to find a real psychological explanation for Malfoy's bad behaviour; other than his family background and the connected snobbery and class consciousness, no further clarifications are offered. This leads to very strong emotions on the side of the reader (as well as on the side of the protagonist because Harry explicitly expresses his hatred regarding Malfoy (HP 144)), because one probably sympathises especially strongly with the protagonist and his friends while despising the antagonist; a phenomenon which is possibly enhanced because of "the author herself cheering on the hero and booing the obvious villains. A popular formula often used in the past is once again pressed into useful service" (Tucker 222). Yet, as can be seen from the quote, it is a rather old-fashioned literary device and probably not that adequate for a modern audience anymore, because children's books and their authors usually try to offer some psychological insights and want their readers to at least try to understand how a character can become a villain. Normally, they try to avoid such black and white thinking and want to detach themselves from any obvious categorisations, because they frequently try to remind their readers that there do not exist absolutely pure and absolutely evil characters,

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[74] In Natov, one can furthermore reread the principle of allusive names (130), and the fact that names always come along with certain connotations is also stressed by the vampire queen when dealing with Lissa (VA 146).

but that each one of us bears some characteristics of both types. Hence, Rowling's characterisation seem to radiate "moral simplicity", a fact which nevertheless might be linked to the age of the protagonist in which children still strongly organise their world according to such dichotomies, and thus this might change throughout the rest of the series (ibid 230).

Interestingly, in Carter's book no real enemies can be detected[75]. The only possible enemy is the new student who intrudes into the already existing structure, namely in form of Macey McHenry. At first, she is explicitly called "the enemy" (ILY 59), which might be only due to the fact that the others don't know her and that she has a rather antisocial attitude. Yet, after some time they get to know her better and they form a kind of truce since Macey has proved her value and that she is worth of such a thing; she has proved that she is not as bad as she seemed to be in the very beginning: "So that's what I had with Macey – an alliance. We weren't friends; we weren't enemies" (ILY 136). And in the end, although still not being a friend as good as Liz and Bex, she is accepted as being one of Cammie's confidants and comes close to reaching the same status as the aforementioned, a fact which might be realised in the following books of the series:

> [F]or the first time, I heard the *we*. There were things I couldn't tell my mother, things I couldn't tell my boyfriend, and things I couldn't tell my friends. But sitting there with Macey McHenry, I realized for the first time that someone knew all my secrets – that I wasn't entirely alone. (ILY 222-223)

Although one can usually detect some sort of struggles and conflicts between students because they are fighting for their positions within the school hierarchy, the much more fascinating struggles do not happen between peers but between students and teachers:

> These hostilities are interesting because they complicate the issues of authority and obedience which lie at the heart of the school story. Superficially, the teachers wield the power and the pupils are required to

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[75] One could probably argue that this might have to do with the fact that it is an all-girls-school and therefore the gender-unity already implies that they do not fight and harass each other; yet, this would lead to a discussion about gender and associated roles and connotations and since this gender perspective is no focus of the present thesis, such a discussion shall be excluded. Nevertheless, it might offer an interesting basis for further research.

obey, generally coerced by the threat of severe punishment. But in fact, the children challenge this authority at every turn. (Grenby, *School Story* 95)

For this reason, the next chapters will deal with the different adult models that are mentioned and implied throughout the stories, irrespective of whether these adults are actually present within the stories or just exist in form of memories and thoughts. The examination of student and adult relations is most likely very appealing because maybe adults are usually seen as the "natural enemies" (Petzold 20) of adolescents, and therefore this dichotomy definitely provides a great potential for conflicts and struggles.

5.3. Adult models

In the following subchapters, the different occurring adult models are analysed. These include parents, headmasters and –mistresses as well as teachers and mentors and investigate not only the different subtypes of all these categories but also the implications of adults within children's literature, i.e. their functions as well as their influence on children characters are discussed.

5.3.1. Parents

In general, the introduction of the boarding school means that children have the advantage of growing up and developing without the immediate influence of their parents (Pinsent 20); however, this leads to the evident reality that "school seems to be the only and therefore overwhelmingly powerful influence in the [...] [students' lives]" (Petzold 19). Nevertheless, although school and education influence students to a certain degree in their opinions and attitudes, they can usually enjoy a rather high degree of freedom, which would not be possible when staying at home under the watching eyes of their parents.

Yet, in the three books which form the basis of this analysis, the absence of parents is often no voluntary one, but absence because of death. For instance, Harry Potter never had the chance to get to know his parents because they were murdered when he was only one year old. Therefore, when getting the chance to see them in the

magical mirror, the desire and urge to see them as well as the feeling of madness almost overpower him (HP 154), and he has to use all his willpower to free himself from these dangerous emotions of longing and despair (Natov 134-135), not least with the help of Dumbledore, who points out the dangers of giving in to these sentiments and only living in one's imagination:

> The Mirror will be moved to a new home tomorrow, Harry, and I ask you not to go looking for it again. If you ever do run across it, you will now be prepared. It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that. (HP 157)

Cammie finds herself in a very similar situation, because she has also lost her dad due to external circumstances she could not influence; he went on a mission to do his job as a spy, but he never returned from it (ILY 20), and while Cammie also has to deal with her feelings of loss, she has at least her mother left. Rose's circumstances are a little bit more complicated, because she actually never got to know her father, since this is part of the world she is living in: Moroi men have their fun and secret affairs with dhampir women, but then they go on to marry a woman of their own kind, thus ignoring their possible offspring with dhampir women. Hence, she only knows her mother, but since her mother works as a guardian, she had no time to bring up her daughter on her own, and the school has overtaken the role of Rose's parents. Consequently, she also has to deal with the non-existence of her parents and it is probably more difficult for her because she cannot put her dead parents on a pedestal and dwell on the happy memories with them; every day, she has to live with the fact that they do not really care about her, and this difficult situation is used by Mia when she intends to hurt Rose:

> At least I *see* my parents […]. At least I know who they both are. God only knows who your father is. And your mom's one of the most famous guardians around, but she couldn't care less about you either. Everyone knows she never visits. Probably was glad when you were gone. If she even *noticed*. (VA 152)

Although their parents are not present, take no interest in their lives or are even dead, they still cast their shadows onto their kids' lives and influence them in one or the other way. Quite frequently, characters have to follow a long history of family tradition, because their parents have already gone to the same school, have

achieved great success and were very popular during their stay at school (as in the case of Harry's parents) and hence the characters always feels some pressure to live up to those achievements since they feel that their surroundings expect them to be at least as good as their parents. This is probably in particular true for Ron, who confesses his dilemma to Harry:

> You could say I have a lot to live up to. Bill and Charlie have already left – Bill was Head Boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy's a Prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they're really funny. Everyone expects me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it's no big deal, because they did it first. (HP 75)

Yet, the book by Rowling is by far not the only one to make use of these elements of expectations and fulfilling certain standards. Cammie also feels "some pressure to follow in [...] [her] dad's footsteps" (ILY 161), and especially through the presence of her mother as headmistress of the academy, she is always reminded of her parents' achievements and is aware of the pressure of being a legacy. Therefore, she feels really proud when Josh compares her to her mother and accepts it as one of the best compliments he could have given her (ILY 155). Like her, Josh also has to deal with following in his father's footsteps because he is expected to start working in the family's pharmacy, which has been run by the family since 1938 (ILY 200), and he does not like this sensation of being forced into a particular future and not being able to choose it voluntarily (ILY 203).

In the book written by Mead, there is also more than one character who has to deal with the influence of their parents on their lives. First of all, Rose obviously has to live up to her mother's standards because she is one of the well-known and best guardians ever in addition to being a female guardian, and hence she has to handle some difficult demands because even though no one requires her to become like her mum, she thinks that she is expected to become like her. Her opinion on this matter might have been influenced not only by her mother but also by the system of school, because as already mentioned above, the setting can exercise a strong influence on its students and is able to shape their ways of thinking and their believes (VA 81). In the case of Rose, it is especially complicated, because she does not only want to fulfil her mother's and the school's expectations in her, but over all, she wants to

meet the standards of her mentor. For her, it seems to be of the utmost importance to please Dimitri's expectations and be as good as he thinks she can be; she does not want to disappoint him but show him her best sides and she has "never cared so much about what one person thought" (VA 125).

Her best friend Lissa has to handle the difficult situation of being the last member of her family that is left, since her family has died in a car accident. She feels the duty to live up to an impossible ideal, an ideal she has made up after her family's death and it is clear that she puts all of them on a pedestal. For instance, she does not want to realise that her brother was not only the nice guy he was in her presence, but that he also possessed some negative qualities; for her, Andre is simply the perfect older brother: "Andre wouldn't have run away. He was so good. Good at everything. Good at getting along with people and all that royal crap" (VA 148). She thinks that she is supposed to follow in his footsteps in order to fulfil her duty and her parents' wish; yet Rose tries to persuade her that her parents would rather have wanted her to be happy than suffering and eventually collapsing in her intents to fulfil the impossible ideal she has created (VA 220). Mead shows her readers the positive outlook that one can change and come to terms with these issues, because in the end, Lissa accepts that her family might not have been perfect and hence she does not have to be perfect either:

> [She] allowed herself to acknowledge that Andre might not have been the hero she'd always believed him to be. It was hard on her, but she finally reached a peaceful decision, accepting that he could have had both good and bad sides like we all do. [...] Most importantly, it finally freed her from feeling like she needed to be him to make her family proud. She could be herself [...]. (VA 325)

Yet, not all the stories end that happily, because for instance Lissa's boyfriend is also stigmatised and influenced by his parents' reputation: they decided to voluntarily become Strigoi, i.e. bad vampires, and hence Christian has to deal with this stigma every day (VA 61). Everyone believes that he might be evil in his very core, and even though he finally starts dating Lissa and gains some approval and confidence in his person, his struggles due to his family situation are still not over at the end of the book. The probably most horrific example of the consequences of the influence of parents and their expectations in their kids can be seen in the case of Natalie: in her

longing and desperation to please her father and fulfil his expectations, she grasps onto the ultimate solution: she turns Strigoi and is even willing to die for him in order to satisfy his morbid need for power (VA 319).

5.3.2. Headmasters and –mistresses

The most outstanding of the present adult figures are usually the respective headmasters and –mistresses, who rule over all the other adult figures in the boarding school like teachers, game-keepers and janitors. Often, they are presented as extraordinary people who have achieved exceptional things, and they realise "the role of idealized authority figure[s]" (Tucker 223). Dumbledore is for instance such an idealised authority figure, and his exceptional status is for example shown by the fact that he is the only person of whom Voldemort, the ultimate evil wizard, was ever frightened of (HP 14). Therefore, he somehow illustrates the leader of all good forces in contrast to the leader of all evil and bad magic (see also chapter 5.5.2.).

Another extraordinary headmistress is the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy, Ms Morgan. She has already achieved great things in her work as a spy, like "defusing a nuclear device in Brussels with only a pair of cuticle scissors and a ponytail holder" (ILY 112), "jumping off a ninety-story balcony in Hong Kong with a parachute she made out of pillowcases" (ILY 118) or using "a black knit top [...] to parachute onto the top of the Iranian Embassy" (ILY 59). Therefore, she also functions as a role model for not only her daughter Cammie, but all the students of the academy. Thus, both of these adult figures are turned into "reassuring and attractive fantasy figure[s]" (Tucker 223) who fuel the imagination of their readers.

Although both of them are exceptional people, the people surrounding them often have divided opinions about them, not least due to their eccentricities and frequent controversial decisions for which they are despised by some conservative people, yet usually loved by their students and readers. For instance, Ms Morgan has made some controversial decisions in terms of admitting students who do not fit into the normal profile of students attending the academy (ILY 13), and Dumbledore sometimes appears to be slightly crazy, so that Harry asks Percy in the beginning whether Dumbledore is nuts: "'Mad?' said Percy airily. 'He's a genius! Best wizard in

the world! But he is a bit mad, yes. Potatoes, Harry?'" (HP 92). This quick change of topic shows that students accept their headmaster's eccentric personality and consider it as something quite normal, once they have gotten used to it. In addition, Percy's answer demonstrates that it is exactly these special qualities and little flaws which make those authority figures so likeable; they are depicted as real people and not like gods and goddesses on a pedestal and hence students as well as readers can connect more easily with them (for a similar observation in terms of protagonists see chapter 5.2.1.).

Another feature which adds to their popularity is that they respect their students and treat them "as people with rights" (Natov 126). They acknowledge that each of their pupils has a personality and character of their own and do not want to oppress them just because of being older and wiser than they are. They treat them with the respect with which they want to be treated, and this might hold a certain fascination for readers who are probably not always in the same situation as the fictional characters, but experience rather often a "state of injustice" and lack of acknowledgement of them as being people with rights (ibid 127). One incident which shows the respect of Dumbledore concerning his students is that he normally explains the reasoning behind a certain rule or decision (HP 95). In addition, he is the typical "adult mentor who helps the hero develop into a functioning, useful man of good character, [...] often [by] working around [...] [his] teachers" (Steege 150). Also Ms Morgan tries to act in the best interest of her students, for instance when bending several rules in order to admit Bex to her school, because she thinks that Bex is a valuable addition to the academy, in addition to the academy being beneficial for Bex's development (ILY 13).

Besides showing respect and care for their students, the typical headmasters and –mistresses are normally very wise people and they know how to react in every situation; they recognise the "necessity of strong, wise adult mentoring to the development of the students" (Steege 151) and hence they also know that this does not only include respect and care, but sometimes also "serious talk or timely action" (ibid). This kind of wisdom is in particular revealed by Dumbledore, who makes many very wise observations concerning death, human nature, fears, or truth:

> The truth [...]. It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution. However, I shall answer your questions unless I have a very good reason not to, in which case I beg you'll forgive me. I shall not, of course, lie. (HP 216)

In this quote, it can once again be seen that he treats his students with respect, because he does not want to lie to Harry, but rather explains to him why he will only tell him as much as he deems necessary and appropriate. In addition, his wisdom is also exposed by the fact that he knew that Harry wanted to rescue the Philosopher's Stone from Voldemort; yet, he did not try to stop him but just taught him as much as he needed to be able to cope with the situation on his own (HP 219).

Up to this moment, I have not mentioned the third headmistress, Ms Kirova, because she stands in sharp contrast to the other two authority figures; she is neither respected nor a special and admired person, but rather demonstrates the negative example of how a headmistress should *not* be. This can clearly be seen by Rose calling her a "self-righteous old bit-" (VA 15), an incident which would never happen to Dumbledore or Ms Morgan. It seems that in the case of headmistress Kirova, Mead adopts the principle of "to look bad is to be bad" (Tucker 225), as already described in relation to the concept of enemies present in Rowling's book (see chapter 5.2.3.). Headmistress Kirova is portrayed as an "old hag [...], sharp-nosed and gray-haired. She was tall and slim like most Moroi and had always reminded [...] [Rose] of a vulture" (VA 17). Obviously, she does not have an attractive and amiable physical appearance – in contrast to Ms Morgan who is depicted as "a hottie" (ILY 26) – and also her character seems to lack the essential traits of a good and admired headmistress as expressed by Rose: "She was a master at [...] [giving lectures]. I swear that was the only reason she'd gone into school administration, because I had yet to see any evidence of her actually *liking* kids" (VA 18-19).

5.3.3. The various teacher models

Originally, I intended to structure the following chapter into two parts called 'the good teacher' and 'the evil teacher'. However, I had to change the structure because as Grenby has already observed, "teachers are generally absent from their pupils' lives" (*School Story* 95) and hence I could not find enough examples for the two parts. For

this reason, I decided to mention the various teacher models which can be found in the three books, because sometimes it is simply not possible to tell whether a teacher is actually a good or a bad and evil teacher for the reason that there do not exist any clear-cut categories into which one could separate them; most of them seem to possess positive as well as negative qualities, which merely indicates the probable decision on behalf of the author to avoid 'moral simplicity'[76]. What I could rather observe is that there generally exist two types of teachers: those who have regular contact with their students, and those who obtain a rather distant position. Allegedly, the first are often considered as enemies, whereas the latter are respected (ibid 96). The adults belonging to the second, remote group are frequently headmasters and – mistresses, and the interesting thing is that they often know exactly what is going on in their schools, although they are in such a distant relationship with their students[77].

Regarding those teachers who deal on a regular basis with their students, authors usually include teachers with a high potential of authority; they possess "the gift of keeping a class silent without effort" (HP 102), as for instance Professor McGonagall and Professor Snape in HP or Stan Alto in VA. The last one is "a scary instructor" (VA 31) who "always [...] [looks] pissed off" (VA 30), thus automatically creating an atmosphere of unease around him. Another teacher who radiates this negative emotion even more strongly is Severus Snape, and while Stan Alto does not use his negative charisma on purpose, Snape evidently does so. Not only does he favour students of his own house (HP 101), he also criticises "almost everyone except Malfoy, whom he seemed to like" (HP 103), and generally, "Snape liked hardly any of the students" (HP 105). This negative aura is enhanced by his looks (his eyes "were cold and empty and made you think of dark tunnels" (HP 102)) in addition to the uncomfortable atmosphere emanating from his classroom in the dungeons. Because of all these factors, Harry hates these lessons as well as the teacher teaching them; they are not only "the worst thing that had happened to him so far" (HP 101) but also "turning into a sort of weekly torture, [because] Snape was so horrible to Harry" (HP 162). While the above mentioned teachers are rather unpleasant and hence despised by their students, Professor McGonagall is still respected by her students even though she is strict too. The difference between her and Snape and Alto is that

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[76] See Tucker 230, as well as chapter 5.2.3.
[77] See Grenby, *School Story* 98-99, as well as HP 219.

she is a fair teacher who does not try to favour any of her students. This attitude is recognised by her students and therefore she is also respected even though she is rather demanding and can "spot trouble quicker than any teacher in the school" (HP 108).

Besides the authoritarian teachers and the obviously mean and unfair ones, authors frequently include crazy and eccentric teachers into their fictional schools, probably with the intention of criticising the existing school system of the real world, or as having been observed by Watson in connection with the classic SST, "Public school fiction competed as zealously as possible with public school life in providing a master's common room full of endearing freaks" (xv). Teachers belonging to this subgroup would evidently be Ms Karp, who is taunted by the majority of her pupils for being "eccentric and paranoid" (VA 53) and her allusive nickname is "Crazy Karp" (VA 72). Another negative example in VA would be Mr Nagy, who is "legendary for his ability to humiliate students by reading notes aloud" (VA 126) and it is well-known amongst students that he is a secret alcoholic (VA 203). In ILY, there are also two rather crazy and paranoid teachers mentioned, namely Dr. Fibs, who follows "the tradition of mad scientists" (ILY 35), and Professor Smith, who is so paranoid to get caught by his enemies, that he "always returns from summer vacation with a whole new look – [...] disguising what he claimed was the most wanted face on three continents" (ILY 10), and this paranoia is mocked by his students, who always make a guessing game out of the question of what he will look like after the summer vacation (ibid).

With all those negative examples of teachers, it almost seems as if there were no positive models. In order to attenuate this negative tendency, authors generally include at least one teacher or adult who represents a positive authority figure because they function as confidants, guides and mentors of their students. In HP, this is – besides Dumbledore – Hagrid the game-keeper, who is "not as fierce as he looked" (HP 104). He does not only introduce Harry into the world of magic but also depicts "the image of those humble but loyal fictional non-academic appointments like ex-sports-men turned groundsmen, barred from the teachers' common room but often confidants to school story heroes" (Tucker 223). While not being a teacher, he

is still one of the adult figures living in the boarding school, and he is definitely one of the few adults Harry can absolutely confide in.

The adult who is unquestionably the best example for a good mentor and guide is Dimitri. They need some time for getting to know each other, but then Rose starts to trust Dimitri because of a shared "sense of understanding" (VA 261), even though he is "all quiet and antisocial (VA 30) and Rose has to notice, "Dimitri's voice was low and unapologetic. They hadn't given [...] [her] a warm and fuzzy mentor" (VA 36). Although he is no sociable confidant like Hagrid, he earns Rose's respect because of his abilities and achievements, as well as through the fact that he respects her and treats her like an autonomous person, so that Rose recognises that "[t]here were some advantages to having such a kick-ass mentor [...]. If [...] [she] could ever beat *him*, [...] [she] could beat anyone" (VA 141). Dimitri is a good mentor to Rose, but nevertheless some complications appear because Rose starts to confuse the roles of mentor, friend and lover, and forgets that one does not automatically equal the other. These feelings complicate their relationship because it is not possible for them to be together: not only are they student and mentor, but moreover, Rose also wants to become a guardian like Dimitri, and a relationship between two guardians would not only make their work impossible but would also be received as an outright scandal. Therefore, Dimitri, as the older and wiser one of the two, does what he has to do, although he probably also feels the same for Rose:

> For the most part, Dimitri treated me just like anyone would expect of a mentor. He was efficient. Fond. Strict. Understanding. There was nothing out of the ordinary, nothing that would make anyone suspect what had passed between us. (VA 327)

As can also be seen in chapter 5.6., such complications and struggles would have been unimaginable in the case of Harry, because in HP, J.K. Rowling leaves out all the problems of puberty, possibly because Harry is still too young for such conflicts. However, also in Mead's book, the issue of students having a crush on their teachers is addressed, namely in the form of the arrival of the new teacher Joe Solomon. At his arrival, Cammie thinks that he is a guy "who would have made James Bond feel insecure [...] [and] Indiana Jones would have looked like a momma's boy compared to [him]" (ILY 12). His nicknames are "Mr. Eyecandy" (ILY 39) and "double-O-hottie"

(ILY 207) and he possibly embodies the image of a teenie-idol whom the majority of girls would like to have as their teacher. As a new person introduced to the already established system of the boarding school, he also provides a basis for turmoil, because for instance all his students start to use eye-liner and lip-gloss in order to look nice for him and they even abstain from their breakfast because they need that time to primp themselves (ILY 15). The mentioning of such an attractive teacher is probably one of the sources of fascination for the readership, because they like to read about handsome guys and perhaps they also see one of their imaginations being realised, namely that of the appearance of an attractive teacher. Yet, in the case of Joe Solomon, the complications are not that severe, because he does not have such a strong relationship to an individual student as Dimitri does.

While the above mentioned teachers are all to a certain extent described in detail, there also appear many teachers who are only mentioned once or twice, e.g. Madame Dabney, Professor Buckingham, Alberta and Ms Meissner; and who consequently play only a minor role on the periphery of the story. The reason for including such characters might be that authors want to maintain the image of school life, and in real school life students normally attend many different classes taught by various teachers. Thus, if an author mentioned only the most important teacher(s), school life would become rather unrealistic and unconvincing in comparison to the experiences of the readership and consequently, in order to keep their stories convincing and related to the real lives of their readers, authors probably include such minor characters. In addition, this fact clearly reveals that classes, school and education play merely a minor role within the SST (the reader does not even know which subjects some teachers are teaching), even though the setting of the stories is a boarding school. However, it seems that there exist more important notions than education, and thus, before talking about these other topics, the concept of education within the various schools shall be analysed.

5.4. Education

In general, "studies itself are unimportant" (Gosling, *his* 50), i.e. that classes and education happen rather in the background of the story. Yet, when included, the education is usually a rather good one (although the occurring teachers would

probably indicate otherwise), and the mentioning of such topics helps the readers to accommodate in the often rather disturbing and unfamiliar worlds and systems of the modern SST; in other words, "the world of Harry Potter is far less distant and more familiar than typical 'secondary worlds' in fantasy, closely allied to the real world we live in" (Barfield 26). This is not only true for Harry, but also for Cammie and Rose, because even though they might be taught strange and unfamiliar subjects, these still provide a well-known framework to readers. One probable reason for substituting the traditional lessons by more fantastic and appealing ones might be that authors do not want to bore their readers with subjects they already know from their own experience; they just take on the school structure but without the traditional subjects. By doing so, these contribute to the appealing and fantastic nature of the modern SST and can be described in details because they differ from what the regular and common students know about school, and the in its essence rather boring part of education becomes one of the most appealing ones for readers (Tucker 223-224). In HP, these unusual areas of teaching include Herbology, Transfiguration, Defence Against the Dark Arts, Potions and Flying lessons, and thus Rowling manages to maintain the readers' attention even when talking about the familiar notions of school and education.

The same phenomenon occurs in VA, where Rose's formation includes for instance Advanced Guardian Techniques, Bodyguard Theory and Personal Protection, or Animal Behaviour and Physiology. She has to learn very unusual content like "Carnegie's Quadrant Surveillance Method or the Rotational Survey" (VA 31), and besides these interesting theoretical subjects, she also has to pass the more practical "senior-year field experience" (VA 35). While Rose has to take all these fascinating subjects, Lissa has to deal with more traditional ones like Russian, American Colonial Literature or Ancient Poetry (as well as her magical formation), and this is due to the fact that novices and Moroi do not attend the same classes, but for the first half of the school-day they attend separate ones, thus indicating the class-segregation amongst students (novices have to learn more practical things in order to become guardians and their main focus lies on physical education, whereas Moroi have to deal with the more sublime realms of education because many of them are royals and hence their focus lies on the intellectual education).

Also in the Gallagher Academy, students learn special and uncommon things when attending classes like Protection and Enforcement, Covert Operations, or Culture and Assimilation lessons; they definitely do not only learn traditional things like Maths or Geography, but more interesting ones like reading body language, basic surveillance, interrogation tactics or the science of Garbology. Besides these extraordinary subjects, they still engage in common subjects such as calligraphy and needlepoint, and languages; yet, the extent and depth of their studies cannot be compared to a normal school but can only be managed by genius students.

Since all of these students have to learn so many things, it is not astonishing that Cammie utters the question whether "there [is] no end to the things [...] [they] have to learn" (ILY 152), and essentially this seems to be true. However, the reason behind these huge amounts of things they have to learn is not just to torture them, but in their best interest because the institutions actually want to provide their students with a good and solid education which can function as a basis for their future lives so that they will be able to cope with all the demanding and difficult (often even life-threatening) situations and problems they might encounter in the real life outside the comforting walls of the boarding school. Sooner or later, all of them will have to venture out of the comfort-zone which school provides for them (ILY 58), and thus the ultimate aim of education is the preparation of students for real life. In fact, Rowling emphasises the importance of real life outside school and classes when writing that "Harry thought that none of the lessons he'd had so far had given him as much to think about as tea with Hagrid" (HP 106), thereby also indicating that lessons might only function as a preparation and training for later life. Also the headmaster, Dumbledore, shows that he knows about the relative unimportance of education and classes when, at the end of the school-year, he says to his students: "Hopefully, your heads are a little fuller than they were ... you have the whole summer ahead to get them nice and empty before next year starts" (HP 220). This clearly demonstrates that he is not convinced that students will still remember everything they have learned after their final exams, and that he probably thinks that the importance of education as preparation is more essential than the exact recalling of facts and figures. Even Hermione, the ultimate nerd and facts-and-figures-fixated student, has to realise this in the end, when she recognises that not every solution can be found in

education: "'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery'" (HP 208).

The function of training for their future professions is especially true in the cases of Rose and Cammie. The first wants to become a guardian and therefore all the lessons serve to prepare and strengthen her for her future task, and she even gets the chance to prove the importance of gained knowledge when having to deal with wolf-like creatures who want to attack her and she tries to recall what her teacher has taught her about these animals (VA 307). The second wants to become a spy, and hence all her gained knowledge should help her to cope with her future missions, or in the words of Joe Solomon: "'Ladies, I'm going to get you ready for what goes on.' He paused and pointed upward. 'Out there [...]'" (ILY 19). Yet, although the teachers intend to prepare their students for what will await them outside the boarding school, Cammie realises repeatedly that her teachers have not covered all areas, especially when she has to deal with her first boyfriend Josh, and she gets desperate because she does not have the adequate training for the situation; it is "something the Gallagher Academy had *totally* not prepared [...] [her] for" (ILY 199).

This observation raises a very interesting question, namely what is actually regarded as education and knowledge? This clearly depends on the respective attitudes and opinions and can differ from system to system, and the clash between different perspectives can be seen when Hagrid introduces Harry to a new world:

> 'Do you men ter tell me,' he growled at the Dursleys, 'that this boy – this boy! – knows nothin' abou' – about ANYTHING?' Harry thought this was going a bit far. He had been to school, after all, and his marks weren't bad. 'I know some things,' he said. 'I can, you know, do maths and stuff. ' But Hagrid simply waved his hand and said, 'About *our* world, I mean. *Your* world. *My* world. *Yer parents' world*.' (HP 41)

Harry has to deal with a whole new way of thinking, and Hagrid supports him in this process, although this is not so easy and he has to admit: "I keep fogettin' how little yeh know" (HP 61). Harry's degree of non-knowledge becomes rather visible when they first enter the magic world of the Diagon Alley, and Hagrid has to explain everything to him, even such little details as the used currency. However, the quite funny and entertaining truth is that while Harry has to adapt himself to the magical

world, Hagrid seems to have problems with the things we as readers perceive as normal and part of our everyday life. For him, the 'normal' world requires some degree of adaptation and getting used to it, and has almost the same magical nature as the magical world of Hagrid has for Harry (HP 53). Therefore, what we perceive as 'normal' is relative and evidently depends on the context, and thus "the reader is forced to consider that one person's fantasy is another's reality, that they are relative terms, not opposites, but different ways of looking at the same thing" (Grenby, Fantasy 153).

5.5. The dual system of values

When examining the three modern SSTs more closely, one realises that many of the occurring values are presented in form of dichotomies, i.e. contrasting values which reflect the various possible perspectives on certain notions. Therefore, the following chapters are dedicated to an analysis of these 'dual systems of values' and shall show that these do not necessarily embrace an attitude of black and white thinking, but rather demonstrate a range of potential points of view.[78]

5.5.1. Individual versus system

Commonly, the system of the boarding school is very important since it offers the framework for the fictional students as well as the readership, and integrity is deemed as crucial: "Discipline and submission to authority are virtues which are absolutely necessary for a smooth functioning society; they are also a prerequisite for the achievement of the highest aim of education: social responsibility" (Petzold 20). The value of integrity is not least shown by the loyal attitude of students to their school, and the school system usually functions because of an "internalisation of a school's ethos" (Grenby, *School Story* 100) – which was very common in the origins of the SST – and although this phenomenon is often associated with the values of community and teamwork, it can also be seen as oppressing students in their need for individuality (ibid 100-106). Some authority adult figures actually try to perceive pupils in their uniqueness and hence in special occasions, certain teachers are not

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[78] Some of these dualities are based on the text by Petzold, who introduces the notion of two sets of values which seem to be present in the classic SST (18).

averse to bending the regulations of the system, thereby creating a kind of "double standard, rejecting and accepting the rules of the school at the same time" (Petzold 20). This happens for instance in HP, when Professor McGonagall does not punish Harry for his breach of not flying without a teacher's supervision, but on the contrary rewards him for his behaviour by suggesting him as seeker for the Quidditch-team of Gryffindor: "I shall speak to Professor Dumbledore and see if we can't bend the first-year rule. Heaven knows, we need a better team than last year" (HP 113).

In the majority of cases, however, students have to become a part of the system by integrating themselves into the school's hierarchy, although this might be connected to conflicts and struggles. Yet, these problems as well as their eventual resolution are considered as part of the process of maturation of a character, and hence they mostly have to deal with their problems on their own, because any help from the side of mentors and adult authority figures might impede a characters coming of age, which is associated with finding one's place within the system. Consequently, it is evident that struggles and conflicts are an inevitable side-effect of this process of coming of age, and students "develop into men [and women] by both respecting and testing authority. They mature by a combination of submission and defiance" (Grenby, *School Story* 96). They first have to find "a balance between the obedience of childhood and [the] independence of adulthood" (ibid 95), and this seems to work primarily through the common principle of rule-breaking, which appears to form a central part of each SST. Most of these texts are about "the hero's paradoxical struggle to maintain tradition *and* to subvert it for evolution to occur. Some taboos must be broken, some boundaries crossed [...]" (Natov 130).

Accordingly, one of the reasons for including rule-breaking is to show a character's wish for finding their place within the system by testing their boundaries, and when protagonists (as well as minor characters) do so, this indicates their normality and that they also have to deal with their flaws and shortcomings (Manners Smith 79). For example, "Bex always has been kind of *rules-optional*" (ILY 7), which is a nice and diplomatic paraphrase of her "rule-breaking spirit" (Manners Smith 79), and also Cammie cannot resist her urge to follow this spirit:

> I knew instantly what the arguments against it should have been: we were too busy; it was against about a million rules; if we got caught, we would be risking our careers forever. But in the silence of the room, we looked at each other, our mutual agreement settling down upon us in the way of people who have known each other too well and too long. 'Okay,' I said finally. 'We'll do the basics, and no one has to know.' Bex smiled. 'Agreed.' (ILY 101)

In Rowling's book, readers get to know a different perspective on the whole issue. While Harry's behaviour is driven by the same spirit as Cammie's (and clearly Rose's, who made the ultimate breach of rules by running away from school), and frequently pushes his luck (HP 115), Hermione does not want to break rules at all (HP 110). She always wants to behave according to the regulations, since she thinks that they have been made for a certain reason, and that their disregarding would lead to a state of anarchy and the collapse of the whole system. Yet, even she has to realise that sometimes it is necessary to break certain rules "for safety or a greater good" (Manners Smith 79), and when recognising this, she becomes "a bit more relaxed about breaking rules" (HP 133):

> Hermione Granger, telling a downright lie to a teacher? [...] Harry was speechless. Hermione Granger was the last person to do anything against the rules, and here she was, pretending she had, to get them out of trouble. It was like Snape had started handing out sweets. (HP 131)

Another reason for including incidents of rule-breaking is that the story and the plot simply demand that kind of action and turmoil, because "without some temptation for the hero to overcome the tale[s] would [often] [...] simply [...] [be] insipid" (Petzold 18). Basically, when excluding these incidents as impetus for further developments and action, very little would remain to be told, and many of the facts which would remain would simply be too boring and unattractive for readers; and therefore, authors have to "position their heroes in the paradoxical situation of rule-bound rule-breakers" (Grenby, *School Story* 96) in order to create some tension and the basis for conflicts and their resolution. One of the exciting consequences of rule-breaking is the question of whether a character gets caught in the act or not, and whether they receive some kind of punishment for their breach. In HP, the sadistic janitor Filch would preferably opt for the old-fashioned methods of punishing students physically (HP 181), and since he seems to enjoy castigating students, Harry feels rather anxious before detention and "wondered what their punishment was going to be. It

must be something really horrible, or Filch wouldn't be sounding so delighted" (HP 181). Hagrid's point of view is more straightforward; he merely thinks that if someone has committed a wrong, they have to pay for it by doing something useful for the whole community, although this type of punishment might, at times, be rather unconventional (HP 182).

The probably most thrilling consequence of breaking rules is at the same time the greatest fear of most students, namely "the ultimate consequence of breaking the rules or not living up to school standards by being expelled" (Steege 149). Since "[t]he love of school and the feeling of belonging it gives students runs deep", the fear of expulsion is used as a common and effective threat by many teachers and often leaves students in a state of despair and hopelessness (ibid). These emotions can probably best be seen in HP:

> He was going to be expelled, he just knew it. He wanted to say something to defend himself, but there seemed to be something wrong with his voice. [...] Now he'd done it. He hadn't even lasted two weeks. He'd be packing his bags in ten minutes. What would the Dursleys say when he turned up on the doorstep? [...] His stomach twisted [...]. (HP 112)

Also Mead makes use of this device to create some tension in the plot, because when Bex does not appear on the first day of school, the first reaction of her friends is showing their fear of her having been expelled (ILY 6). Even the normally so cocky Rose can be threatened by the impending prospect of being expelled (VA 20), and headmistress Kirova seems to know that expulsion is a device which helps to intimidate even the most complicated students, which becomes obvious when she warns Rose: "Your continued enrolment at St. Vladimir's is strictly probationary. Step out of line *once*, and you're gone. [...] Fail to comply with any of this, and you will be sent ... away" (VA 25). Interestingly, the concept of threatening students by indicating their possible expulsion is not only used by adult authority figures, but sometimes also amongst students when they want to bully each other (VA 171).

The extent of this menace and the deep impact it has on students and their way of thinking is impressively shown in HP, when Hermione scolds Harry and Ron for having committed a breach of school-regulations: "I hope you're pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed – or worse, expelled [...]" (HP 120). To her,

expulsion appears to be even worse than death, and hence, one has to ask the question of why this is the case; and "[w]hat, in fact, is so valuable about the boarding school experience that readers should agree that expulsion would be a terrible fate?" (Steege 149). The answer to this question might be found in the fact that, as already mentioned above, students usually love their school and share a strong feeling of loyalty regarding the respective institution. Boarding schools frequently offer them a space where they can develop and mature, as well as providing them with special and forever lasting friendships; and consequently, the school one attends is "not just a temporary association but a very real part of one's identity" (ibid 146-147), a part which one does not want to lose because this would be like losing a part of oneself.

5.5.2. Good versus evil

Traditionally, one would probably assume that the issue which is heavily related to the question of good and evil is that of religion. Especially in the classic model of the SST, "frequent incidental mention of prayer and trust in God" (Pinsent 12) can be found, as well as the endorsement of Christian values; and "while religious content is characteristic of the genre, it is not central to readers' enjoyment of the books" (Gosling, *sig* 25). Since it is not essential for the attraction of the genre, it is not explicitly included in all books, and for example in HP, one can only implicitly detect the religious framework, as for instance in the comparison of Dumbledore with God, a connection which "has become almost a standard feature of the school story. [...] [Headmasters] are loving and benevolent but just and severe, demanding obedience and ready to inflict harsh punishment, or to forgive" (Grenby, *School Story* 97). Because of these features, an obvious connection between God and Dumbledore is established; he is the ultimate leader of all the good forces against Voldemort and his evil supporters (Doughty 247), and his godly position is probably stressed by the lack of explicit religious aspects. In the case of HP, magic seems to overtake the role of religion, an aspect which is further dealt with in chapter 5.5.3.

While Rowling ignores all overt connections to religion, Carter at least mentions the "Gallagher family chapel" (ILY 37), yet she does not describe any religious services or students actually entering the chapel and going to mass. The only of the three

analysed books, for which religion seems to play a major role, is the one by Richelle Mead. In VA, readers frequently come in contact with "the small Russian Orthodox chapel that served most of the school's religious needs" (VA 56). First of all, this has to do with the fact that many students come from an Eastern Orthodox Christian background and while attending the mass is optional, many of them go there "either because they believed or because their parents made them" (VA 76). One of these students is Lissa, who attends mass on a regular basis and also finds refuge in the attic of the chapel, a place she often retreats to in order to be alone and comfort her inner torments and find inner peace. This kind of belief is yet not shared by her best friend: "Lissa had always attended mass regularly. Not me. I had a standing arrangement with God: I'd agree to believe in him – barely – so long as he let me sleep in on Sundays" (VA 56-57). Rose rather corresponds to the typical image of a teenager who perceives religion as something boring, or as she states, "church was every bit as lame as I remembered" (VA 76).

Another aspect which indicates the importance of religion and holiness is the fact that only living vampires, the Moroi, can enter holy ground, whereas any access to such realms is denied to the dead vampires, the Strigoi. According to Rose, this is related to "that sinning-against-the-world thing" (VA 61). Yet, Christian makes use of that truth, because by attending mass regularly, he can prove to the rest of the school that he is still a good vampire and has not gone Strigoi yet, i.e. that for him, church functions as a means to an end because with "his fake faith" (VA 76) he can show that he is good. This furthermore points out that often just the external appearance counts, because people simply believe what they see without further questioning it. Like in the case of Christian, also Rose makes use of religion and church as a means to an end, because during her time of detention, she is not allowed to spend any time with her friends, but since religious service cannot be denied to anyone, she uses the attending of mass as an excuse to spend time with Lissa.

The fascinating aspect of combining vampires and religion is that the Moroi – the good vampires – have their own saints and priests, and they even believe in God. This might be funny when considering that they are still vampires, and these creatures are usually depicted as unholy and absolutely bad and evil. Consequently,

one evidently sees that Mead has created her own concept of a magical world with its own rules and values, and these are further observed in chapter 5.5.3.

According to Zipes, many contemporary children's books do "no longer attempt to teach anything heavy-handedly 'moral'" (Zipes, *School Stories* 1815), but rather show that teenagers can make bad decisions without having to deal with any severe consequences and negative outcomes. It actually seems to be 'normal' to indulge in activities such as sex, drinking and taking drugs, because teenagers are simply bored and lonely and therefore they retreat to such bad decisions (ibid). However, this does not seem to be the case in the three modern SST which form the basis of this analysis, because in none of them it is shown that decisions do not have any consequences. It is rather the opposite case: authors repeatedly emphasise that one usually has the choice between good and evil, for instance "establishing Voldemort and Harry as opponents who have similar backgrounds and similar talents [...] illustrate[s] the importance of free will" (Doughty 248). Hence, it is evidently Harry's choice to side with Dumbledore and the good forces and fight against Voldemort and his dark magic, and each time he refuses to give in to the evil forces and chooses the (sometimes much more difficult) good path, the contrast between him and Voldemort grows stronger and he proves that one can escape initially bad circumstances by choosing to do so (ibid 248-249). Other characters, however, do not possess the same moral strength as Harry, as can be seen in the example of Professor Quirrell, who shows his bad moral choice by telling Harry: "A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it" (HP 211). Like Quirrell and Voldemort, the Strigoi in VA also voluntarily choose to align with the evil forces in their search for power and immortality: "They've turned to the dark side to gain immortality, and they want to do whatever they can to keep that immortality" (VA 34). The wrongness of such decisions is repeatedly stressed by depicting the negative consequences and "inviting either the reader's emulation of a good model or his rejection of a bad one" (Petzold 17).

Especially within the school context, morality as well as a certain code of honour and specific values are very important, because these guarantee the functioning of the system of school, and hence actions such as "taking advantage of being related to

those in positions of power" (Pinsent 14) are clearly rejected, as in the case of Cammie, who does not abuse her personal mother-daughter-relation to the headmistress, but rather wants to be treated like any other student. Since these elements are very important, they did not only play a major role in the origins of the SST, but have not been neglected in the modern SST either. However, what might be true is that nowadays, these values are no longer confined to the school setting but can often be seen in the larger context, including the world outside the boarding school (ibid 14-18).

Since good and evil are often heavily intertwined, it is sometimes rather difficult to decide what or who is actually good or bad. In many cases it is only a fine line between good and evil, as can be seen in the example of the normally good Lissa, who abuses compulsion and by using this dangerous device too much, she almost gives in to the dark side and almost hurts another student:

> Compulsion. For all I knew, she was seconds away from having him turn the bat on himself. [...] I felt a trickle of her emotions. They were strong enough to practically knock me over. Black. Angry. Merciless. Startling feelings to be coming from sweet and steady Lissa. I'd known her since kindergarten, but in that moment, I barely knew her. And I was afraid. (VA 209)

Moreover, this incident demonstrates that the notions of good and evil are rather close to each other, and hence it does not necessarily mean that a good person is only pure and angelic, and an evil person only bad and demonic; the matter seems to be much more complicated. Because of the complexity of the matter, frequent "dilemmas address the difficulty of distinguishing at times between good and evil" (Doughty 247), and protagonists have to deal with the fact that evil can disguise as good and the evident consequence that evil is therefore not always easy to detect. They "must go beyond the apparent truth of things and, ultimately, learn to trust what [...] [they see] and act on what is right" (Natov 137). This complexity and the ability of evil to disguise as good can clearly be seen in HP, where Harry and his friends initially think that Professor Snape is the bad guy; yet it turns out that the seemingly poor and innocent, stuttering Professor Quirrell is the real villain (HP 209).

Also in VA, this phenomenon of the intertwined good and evil can be detected. First of all, the obvious villain Prince Victor Dashkov manages to hide his true nature and his bad intentions behind his friendly attitude, relations and his evident poor and pitiful appearance, because he suffers from a special disease, which brings him closer to death every day. Therefore, Rose and Lissa do not see behind his mask in the beginning, because they only see the outer facade of a dying man.

The second character in this book who has to deal with the connections of good and evil is Christian Ozera. His parents have decided to become Strigoi when he was still very young, and therefore everyone believes that he is also necessarily a bad guy and that he will turn Strigoi too. Rose also wants to believe this at first, because it is more convenient for her that way; thus, she does not have to deal with the conflicts arising from him and Lissa starting to date, because she simply writes him off as a bad guy, thereby denying him and Lissa the chance to be together. However, since Rose belongs to the good characters, she eventually realises her mistake: "I'd messed it all up. I'd let my anger and jealousy get the best of me and ended up separating them" (VA 222). After having noticed that Christian is actually a really nice guy and also a good person (as his name evidently indicates from the very beginning), they start to become some kind of friends, at least allies, in order to save Lissa and act in her best interest, a development which happens to the surprise of Rose: "When the next words left my lips, I could barely believe it. 'I think ... you might be .... good for her'" (VA 224).

As can be seen from the analysis above, the struggles between good and evil have not only played an important role in former books (especially in fantasy fiction but also in the classic SST), but still do so nowadays. Since the modern SST usually includes further elements, such as for instance fantasy, the conflict becomes even more intense because in its most extreme form, it can mean the end of the world as we know it. The battle between good and evil often creates life-and-death-situations, as well as the possible taking over of the world by evil forces.[79] For this reason, many authors show that one sometimes has to make sacrifices for the greater good, like for example when Ron lets himself being beaten in the chess game, so that Harry and

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[79] See also Pinsent 20.

Hermione can go on to accomplish their mission of saving the Philosopher's Stone, and thus also the whole world by preventing the rise of Voldemort (HP 205).

5.5.3. Fictional world versus real world

Especially in the modern SST, one encounters not only the fictional setting of the boarding school the characters attend, which forms an enclosed world with its own system and regulations, but increasingly also a fictional world attached to the school. In other words, also outside the school-setting, the characters belong to a world which differs from our real world and this is the case in two of the three books, namely in HP and VA.[80] In these two books, the reader is confronted with fictional worlds connected to fantasy and imagination because both authors have created a whole new world and a new system which differs from our system and our real world in crucial aspects. For instance, in HP readers encounter wizards and magic, and many magical creatures they have never heard of before. Usually they do not question this system and the new world, because Rowling invented "creatures that obey formal laws and principles and are thus inherently explicable as part of an augmented natural world" (Barfield 27), i.e. they seem "natural because their powers and qualities are explained" (ibid 28). A similar phenomenon occurs in VA, where the readers come into contact with good and bad vampires and their magical powers, as well as magical creatures. Yet, since all the unfamiliar aspects of this new world and system are explained to the reader throughout the book, they normally also accept these facts as truth, just as it is the case with HP.

Another factor – besides the detailed and plausible explanations – which possibly contributes to ease the readers' adaptation to the unknown fantastic worlds is the fact that although Rowling and Mead create new worlds, some aspects which are similar to our world are maintained. For instance, children still have to go to school to learn things and mature, and both authors make most definitely use of this phenomenon in order to make the identification with the characters possible because if their world would differ in every single aspect from ours, readers would not be able to find any

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[80] The only book of the three for which this is not true is the one by Carter, and hence it will be excluded from this part of the analysis because although it is somehow unrealistic in terms of its characters, they are still more or less 'normal' human girls who are in general part of a world as we know it, and therefore, their fictional world does not differ from ours; it is simply their enclosed world of the boarding school which differs from our usual expectations on that notion.

connecting spots and hence they would probably not be able to feel empathy with the characters. Actually, both "fantasy world[s] [...] [are] so extremely close to our own that, paradoxically, nothing seems as if it could be of genuinely supernatural cause" (ibid 27). This is against the classic notion of fantastic worlds as can be seen in J.R.R. Tolkien's works, where the fantastic world is rather distanced from our own, and not all the unfamiliar elements are actually explained to the reader. Consequently, it is obvious that both books do not really fit into the classic definition of fantasy, and therefore they are often criticised as being minor works of fantasy. Yet, this is not true because they are similar to the classic works of fantasy, while at the same time being different (but therefore not automatically worse). Since the fantastic worlds in both books are rather close to our real world, and both authors seem to be "expert[s] in thinking up new ways of turning everyday reality on its head" (Tucker 231), readers can escape their own problems of the real world by entering these fantastic worlds, while at the same time being able to confront their problems from a different and safe stance since the fantastic and the real world are that strongly related so that comparisons can easily be made (Barfield 27-31). Rowling, for example, includes the problems arising from a class system, because also wizards have to deal with prejudices born from that structure. One character who is particularly involved into this matter is Malfoy, who tells Harry already in the beginning: "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there" (HP 81).

In Mead's book, readers too can detect many problems and conflicts they might know from their own world, even though these are presented as problems inherent to the vampire world. For instance, the vampire government, their system of royal families and how the rulers are elected, as well as the fact that not all vampires are happy with this system, might reflect the unhappiness of many humans about their government. Another problem which is emphasised is that of hypocrisy, which can frequently be found in our world too, especially when looking at governments or our ways of living. Repeatedly, we somehow exploit and take advantage of certain sources because we need them to survive, yet at the same time we look down on them for their lack of strength to not give us what we need and this conflict is also present in the vampire society:

> The feeder, however, had no such reservations [regarding the volunteering of blood]. An eager look crossed her face – the look of a junkie about to get her next fix. Disgust poured into me. It was an old instinct, on that had been drilled in over the years. Feeders were essential to Moroi life. They were humans who willingly volunteered to be a regular blood source, humans from the fringes of society who gave their lives over to the secret world of the Moroi. They were well cared for and given all the comfort they could need. But at the heart of it, they were drug users, addicts to Moroi saliva and the rush it offered with each bite. The Moroi – and guardians – looked down on this dependency, even though the Moroi couldn't have survived otherwise unless they took victims by force. Hypocrisy at its finest. (VA 44-45)

At the same time, this quote also indicates another phenomenon, namely that "[t]he borders between our world and that of the [vampires,] wizards and witches [...] [are] in flux, marked by the dynamic of continual social interchanges between [vampires,] magical humans and their non-magical counterparts" (Barfield 29). Rowling and Mead probably make use of that phenomenon of "the infiltration of the ordinary world by the luminous and magical" (Natov 128) so that their extraordinary fictional worlds become even more plausible and fascinating for their readers because they are no remote spaces but easy to enter. Often, the fictional world is presented by contrasting it to our real world, and it is shown to be more exciting and fascinating than our boring real world (HP 7), thus presenting readers with a reason to read the books because by doing so, they can enter these breathtaking worlds. The character which best describes this fascination with the fictional world is Harry Potter, because like the reader, he is new to the extraordinary magical world. He is "eager to see more magic" (HP 51) and "wished he had about eight more eyes. He turned his head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once" (HP 56) and according to Tucker, "[y]oung readers, faced by the same comparative lack of glamour in their own day schools, will almost certainly side with Harry on this" (225).

However, not everyone might be that fascinated by the encounter of the two distinct worlds, and both authors also include different perspectives and opinions on that matter[81]. For instance, Rowling includes Mr and Mrs Dursley, who are both rather

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[81] See also Natov's explanation on the three different groups of people in terms of how they deal with the magical world when encountering it (128).

unhappy when coming into contact with something that does not fit into their world and which is against their previous experiences; they "were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense" (HP 7). They even have an unsympathetic attitude towards everything they cannot explain, as can be seen when Mr Dursley says to Harry:

> I accept there's something strange about you, probably nothing a good beating wouldn't have cured – and as for all this about your parents, well they were weirdos, no denying it, and the world's better off without them in my opinion [...]. (HP 46)

When having to deal with all the extraordinary things that happen in the first chapter because magic is intruding into the real world, he is "enraged" (HP 8) and hopes for the first time in his life that "he was imagining things, [a thing] which he had never hoped before, because he didn't approve of imagination" (HP 10). Mr Dursley and his wife despise "talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn't" (HP 24), and thus, when the letters for Harry start to arrive and they are once again confronted with magic, their reactions clearly show what they think of it: Mr Dursley's "face went from red to green faster than a set of traffic lights. And it didn't stop there. Within seconds, it was the greyish white of old porridge" (HP 30-31), and Mrs Dursley "looked as though she might faint. She clutched her throat and made a choking noise" (HP 31).

Fascinatingly, Mead also includes this somehow hostile or at least reserved attitude towards the other world from a different perspective, namely from that of the magical creatures. Some of them refuse any contact with humans and like to live separately from them, whereas others are more open and also live and work amongst them (VA 232). She furthermore mentions the group of people who are ignorant to anything extraordinary when stating that "Psi-hounds were one of many types of magical creatures that wandered the world, creatures that humans never knew about or else didn't believe they'd really seen" (VA 38), thus clearly showing that magic is intruding into the real world but not always noticed. The same phenomenon can be observed in the first chapter of HP, where many people are ignorant to all the strange things that are happening in the real world, and if they notice them, they usually try to find a perfectly normal explanation for them.

In these new worlds and systems which are created by Rowling and Mead, certain elements which are definitely not part of our real world can be found, and in particular these are all issues connected to magic. Rowling adopts a rather traditional stance on magic, seeing it as an ability which certain people – so called wizards and witches – possess, and which they use in order to perform spells and magic, and when trying to abuse it for their own advantage by affecting, hurting or even killing others, they turn to the side of dark magic, which stands in sharp contrast to that of good magic. Mead continues this traditional perspective on magic by adding further aspects to it. For instance, she explicitly declares magic as a gift; it is connected to life and the world surrounding the vampires (which can be seen by the five basic categories of magic, namely water, air, fire, earth and spirit) and differentiates the good vampires from the bad ones because Strigoi, since being dead vampires, can no longer make use of magic (VA 47). Like Rowling, she emphasises that magic should never be used as a weapon (VA 107) with the purpose of hurting another creature and in addition, she also shows why academies like Hogwarts, or in her case St. Vladimir's, are so important:

> Academies like this [St. Vladimir's] existed to help Moroi control the magic and learn how to do increasingly complex things with it. Students also had to learn the rules that surrounded magic, rules that had been in place for centuries and were strictly enforced. (VA 47)

She openly states that magic has to be used carefully and that certain rules might be necessary in order to avoid an abuse of magic, because magic usually equals power, i.e. when not using it correctly, "it was like playing God" (VA 297). Consequently, it is so important for children to go to school, because this is the place where they learn how to deal with the whole situation and how to handle magic correctly; school should teach them how to responsibly make use of their abilities because "[g]aining superpowers doesn't mean you know how to use them" (VA 322). Finally, Mead includes another aspect which is not present in HP, namely the comparison of magic and learning how to use it with the phase of puberty and the finding of one's identity: "All Moroi had a small ability in each element. When they got to be around our age, students 'specialized' when one element grew stronger than the others: earth, water, fire, or air. Not specializing was like not going through puberty" (VA 47).

Besides the whole issues which are explicitly linked to magic, also 'normal' and everyday notions are upgraded and enhanced. In terms of education, for example, magic clearly offers some advantages for teachers, because during examinations, they can use an "Anti-Cheating spell" (HP 191), thus avoiding any kind of incorrect behaviour during the exam. Another issue which might be much more important to the readers is that of the mentioning of a very special and extremely intense sort of friendship, as in the case of Rose and Lissa. They have been friends since they first met in kindergarten, and they are still best friends and during the last few years, their relationship has even intensified because of the appearance of their "psychic bond" (VA 6). They are inexplicably connected to each other by that bond because it allows Rose to slip into Lissa's mind and experiences the feelings her friends senses and sometimes she can also see what her friend is seeing, thus experiencing the world from her best friend's perspective. This clearly makes their friendship something special and exceptional, because it leads to an almost perfect understanding between them. Yet, it also complicates their relationship sometimes, as described by Rose:

> I hated when that happened. Feeling Lissa's emotions was one thing, but slipping into her was something we both despised. She saw it as an invasion of privacy, so I usually didn't tell her when it happened. Neither of us could control it. It was another effect of the bond, a bond neither of us fully understood. Legends existed about psychic links between guardians and their Moroi, but the stories had never mentioned anything like this. (VA 13)

However, although they have to deal with some problems arising from their extraordinary connection, they probably still represent the wish of the majority of children, namely that of an exceptionally intense and never-ending friendship. In this sense, Mead acknowledges that imagination of her readers and fuels it by including such a thing as the bond, thereby offering her readers a kind of wish-fulfilment and a further reason for reading her book, because thus they can satisfy their need for the imagination of an almost perfect understanding with their best friend.

5.6. Reader identification and empathy

The question which shall be answered by this final chapter of the analysis of my primary sources is how it is possible for readers to still identify with the characters of the modern SST and feel empathy with them, although they are no normal children but spies, wizards or vampires, attributes which are most likely to be unfamiliar to the readers. The reason for including these two notions into my analysis is that "empathy – a spontaneous sharing of feelings, including physical sensations in the body, provoked by witnessing or hearing about another's condition" (Keen xx) as well as identification with fictional characters seem to be very important, especially to the non-analytical, average (child) readers, who constitute the intended readership of the modern SST:

> [M]iddlebrow readers tend to value novels offering opportunities for strong character identification. They report feeling both empathy with and sympathy for fictional characters. They believe that novel reading opens their minds to experiences, dilemmas, time periods, places and situations that would otherwise be closed to them. They emphasize the universality of human emotional responses in their reports on reading, sometimes undervaluing real differences among people of diverse cultures. They unself-consciously judge the success of novels based on how well they could identify with characters' feelings. […] Empathy shapes their recommendations and judgments about fiction. (ibid ix)

In other words, this means that the more readers can identify with fictional characters and the more they feel with them, the more successful a book will probably be on the market. For this reason, the concepts of empathy and identification seem to be especially important these days, during a time in which repeatedly fewer people become regular readers because "[n]ovels that succeed in invoking strong character identification are likelier to reach large numbers of readers" (ibid x), and hence these concepts should also be important to literary critics. The reason for mentioning the notions of identification and empathy together is that

> [c]haracter identification often invites empathy, even when the fictional character and the reader differ from each other in all sorts of practical and obvious ways, but empathy for fictional characters appears to require only minimal elements of identity, situation, and feeling, not necessarily complex or realistic characterization. Whether a reader's empathy or her identification with a character comes first is an open question:

spontaneous empathy for a fictional character's feelings sometimes opens the way for character identification. (ibid xii)

Since they are obviously connected and it is hard to determine which of the two has to happen first in order to trigger the other, I will include both notions together in the following analysis and look at the question of how an author can create them with their book and characters. First of all, it is probably through the use of particular literary devices that authors establish a relationship between their characters and their readers. Keen names, for instance, first person narration, interior representation of character's consciousness and emotional states as literary devices which enhance and trigger identification and empathy (x). Another of these devices might have to do with the conventions and literary formulas of particular genres which probably "increase empathic resonance (ibid xiii) in certain readers, i.e. for some readers, generic conventions are to some extent responsible for triggering their empathy. Yet, this obviously differs from reader to reader, since each individual has not only a different reaction to a book, but usually also a different pre-disposition to feeling empathy. Therefore, authors' intentions and their invitations to identify with their characters and feel empathy with them might not always be realised by their readers (ibid xii). As one can see, it is often rather difficult for authors to accomplish their intentions, and therefore they have to come up with certain strategies, like for example with applying *bounded strategy empathy*. This type of empathy "operates with an in-group, stemming from experiences of mutuality and leading to feeling with familiar others" (ibid xiv), and is probably the strategy which is applied by authors of the modern SST, since they write about an in-group, namely that of students and adolescents, with which their intended audience can rather easily identify because they make similar experiences in their everyday lives.

Besides the reason that books might be more successfully received by readers if they can identify with the characters, Keen mentions a further reason for the importance of empathy and identification. She explains the common belief "that novel reading cultivates empathy that produces good citizens for the world" (xv), thereby showing that many people think that readers' response of identification and empathy with fictional characters might be responsible for their behaviour in the 'real' world and that one consequence of processing fiction might actually be an enhanced predisposition to altruism (x-xiii). My personal conclusion from reading these beliefs is

that perhaps, identification and empathy are therefore particularly important in children's literature because children are supposed to learn all these values in order to become functioning members of our society, and hence elements contributing to these notions have to be present in their fiction, i.e. also in the modern SST.

One of these elements is the first person narration, which is used in the books written by Mead and Carter. By using this type of narration, it is possible to establish a direct connection with the readers; they can read about first-hand experiences and get to know what the protagonists are exactly thinking and feeling. Consequently, a really close connection between reader and protagonist is established and this makes it easier for readers to feel empathy with the characters. Rowling does not make use of this literary device, but she includes the readers immediately on the very first page of the book when stating that "our story starts" (HP 7), thereby offering her readers to identify with what is told because it is also 'their story'. In ILY, the readers are also explicitly included, but this time by the repeated and quite common use of the personal pronoun 'you' with which the narrator addresses the readers. Through phrases like "but you get what I mean" (ILY 128), "you'll never hear me admit it out loud" (ILY 146), or "[h]ere's the thing you need to know" (ILY 146), the reader can feel part of the story and almost like a friend of the protagonist, a friend who becomes the witness of Cammie's most personal thoughts and feelings by being explicitly invited into the story.

Another device which occurs in ILY is the use of a humorous and sarcastic tone as well as the exaggeration of little things. This is a quite typical feature for many adolescents who feel everything more intense and whose feelings are more extreme than those of other age-groups.[82] By encountering these elements within a text, readers are entertained while reading it and thus they probably want to identify with the characters, because funny and entertaining people are always rather popular. One especially melodramatic exaggeration (which is also admitted by Cammie to be rather overdramatic) can be seen when Macey helps Cammie to cope with her boy-problems: "OH. MY. GOSH. It was as if the gray storm clouds had parted and Macey McHenry was the sun, bringing wisdom and truth into the eternal darkness. (Or something a lot less melodramatic.)" (ILY 134). Other examples of this juvenile

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[82] See Watson xiii, as well as chapter 2.4.3.

exaggeration would be the feeling of Cammie that Josh is "the only man [...] [she] could ever love" and her "potential soul mate" (ILY 154), or when she tells the reader: "We waited two weeks. TWO WEEKS! Do you know how long that is in fifteen-year-old-girl time? A lot. A LOT, a lot" (ILY 140).

The most important device for providing a basis for identification and empathy are yet the characters themselves, i.e. how are the protagonist and friends depicted, so that they become likeable to the readers so that they empathise with them? This is very likely to be due to the fact that characters often have to experience similar problems like their readers, and "children are drawn to complexity and reflection – accompanied by the spectacular – integrated, always, in the real and recognizable world it is the child's mission to negotiate and struggle through" (Natov 139). One of these problems might be that characters also make mistakes; they feel insecure and are not always setting a good example for their readers. Otherwise, it would "be rather dismaying to young readers all too aware of their own deficiencies by comparison" (Tucker 227), and therefore readers can relax; they do not feel the need to be perfect since the characters are not perfect either, and consequently they rather appreciate them for their little flaws and shortcomings than for their perfect behaviour and great achievements because in order to strengthen their own self-esteem, readers need protagonists with their own deficiencies.

Other issues that are concerned with the protagonists and help to establish a bridge to the readers are often the typical issues of adolescence and coming of age which are included into the books because readers have to deal with them in their real lives. Yet, this is not the case in the book by Rowling. Like in the classic SST, her characters "appear very young for their age – adolescence does not appear to have happened to them" (Pinsent 16). This might be related to the fact that Harry and his friends are only eleven years old, and therefore too young for experiencing such issues as falling in love for the first time, and hence these issues are commonly ignored in his whole surroundings. At the age of eleven, Harry has to deal with other problems that are more interesting and urgent to readers of the same age-group, such as heroism, adventures and friendship. This means that "Harry's problems stem from being Harry Potter, not from being a boy in a world that views young men with suspicion" (Doughty 250) and this absence of dealing with masculinity and the

connected conflicts and problems "is, perhaps, one reason for [...] [the book's] appeal for boy readers" (ibid 253). Yet, it might be that these issues will appear in the further books of the series, since they might gain more importance the older Harry and his friends get.

Although issues of adolescence did not play a role in the classic SST and neither do they in HP, it is a quite common method to include these notions into the modern SST in order to attract readers. Since these particular conflicts play a major role within our society and in the adolescents' real lives, authors simply try to reflect our society and culture and the important values and elements. In the following analysis, the most prominent of these issues shall be examined in the examples of Mead and Carter, because in these two books, typical issues of adolescence do occur – probably because the protagonists and their friends are already older than Harry (in ILY, the protagonist will soon turn 16, and in VA, Rose is 17 years old) and therefore more concerned with the following issues.

While J.K. Rowling ignores to acknowledge any problems which might be specifically due to the fact that her main character is male, Carter addresses the problems which are particularly true for being a girl. Thereby, she creates a strong connection to her audience, because the intended audience consists probably mainly of girls in more or less the same age as her protagonist. Thus, readers can feel acknowledged and understood in their concerns, as when for instance Cammie states: "All these years I'd thought being a spy was challenging. Turns out, being a girl is the tricky part" (ILY 144). Although she is no normal and prototypical girl, readers can thus identify with her because she is confronted with similar problems, including boys and dating as well as sexism and the general underestimation of girls. Cammie somehow manages to console readers because she tells them "that society's tendency to underestimate women is a Gallagher Girl's greatest weapon" (ILY 163), and when reading this, girls might not feel that powerless anymore but rather see this misjudgement as something they can use for their own advantage by surprising the world with what truly lies in them.

A further element, which might be connected to the fact that the intended audiences are female readers and that their protagonists are girls, is the mentioning of topics

which are generally rather important to girls, such as beauty (ILY 98), shopping (VA 231) and fashion, for instance when Rose finds a special dress, "[t]he kind of dress that started religions" (VA 243). By mentioning the importance of these topics for the protagonists, readers detect a common ground with them and hence they possibly want to identify with them, or at least they can understand them and feel empathy with them.

Another typical issue, which is not necessarily connected to being a girl but rather to the age-group to which the protagonists belong, is that of new feelings and emotions with which characters have to deal, namely characteristically the feelings of falling in love for the first time. Whilst the notions of love and sex are not addressed in HP, they are frequently referred to in the other two books, and especially in ILY, almost no action and plot would remain when removing the scenes related to these issues. Almost all the action hinges on the very fact that Cammie meets Josh in the beginning of the book, and that thereafter, she wants to get to know him better. By adding these aspects to her book, Carter manages to demonstrate the normality of Cammie and that she is just like any other girl, because as she admits: "I couldn't ignore it anymore: the universal truth that, despite our elite education and genius IQs, we didn't know boys" (ILY 129).

Also Mead openly addresses these aspects; for instance, she adds scenes of flirting (VA 74) and getting naked (VA 106), and she even mentions societal problems which are connected to love and sex. She shows that the fantastic fictional world of dhampirs and Moroi is not without any problems, but that her characters have to deal with certain problematic aspects just as it is the case for our society. In the case of her book, one major problem is that of 'blood whores', i.e. she explains a problem arising from the societal structure of the fantastic system:

> [P]lenty of young Moroi men liked fooling around with dhampir women, although those guys usually went on to marry Moroi women. That left a lot of single dhampir mothers, but we were tough and could handle it. [...] [S]ome of them lived together in communities. These communities had a bad reputation. I don't know how much of it was true, but rumors said Moroi men visited all the time for sex. and [sic] that some dhampir women let them drink blood while doing it. Blood whores. (VA 80)

Besides the connected problems on a more general level, both authors also mention the immediate conflicts with which the characters have to deal. Firstly, this would be the feeling of jealousy that comes along with falling in love, as when Rose feels jealous of Christian because when he and Lissa fall in love, she is somehow not as important to her friend as she used to be; from that moment on, she is not the only person that understands Lissa and can calm her down and this really annoys her in the beginning (VA 116). And Rose herself also has to deal with the fact that she is the object of someone's jealousy, because one of her best friends, Mason, falls in love with her; a fact which she only realises after a rather long time, and which complicates their relationship enormously (VA 136). Carter furthermore addresses the conflict of having to choose between friends and one's boyfriend, which can be quite complicated since all of a sudden, the priorities of a character change and they are no longer sure whether friends are more important than their boyfriend, and therefore they get into troubles with their friends (ILY 238-239).

Since the majority of the action takes place within the enclosed space of the boarding school, another conflict, typical for the school-context, appears, namely that of having a crush on a teacher. This is not only complicated because of the age-difference, but obviously also because of the respective roles of the involved persons, and the related argument of not abusing one's role of authority. In ILY, this issue is only very lightly addressed and has an almost funny side to it, since suddenly one can meet "a lot of eye-lined and lip-glossed girls with growling stomachs" (ILY 15) in the corridors of the Gallagher Academy, because when having to decide between breakfast and looking good for the new handsome teacher, the girls' choice is rather self-evident. All of them are just naturally drawn to their new teacher looking "like a cross between a young George Clooney and Orlando Bloom" (ILY 80), so that even the seemingly cool and composed Macey "just batted her eyelashes and went all seductive in a way that totally didn't go with her combat boots" (ILY 37). Yet, Carter's tone remains light and sweet because none of the girls actually falls for Joe Solomon; their reaction is just typical for teenage girls and reminds more of the admiration towards a singer or actor than of really falling in love.

In the case of Rose, however, this is slightly different because she really falls in love with Dimitri. However, since they cannot be together for various reasons, this means

a rather dramatic complication for her life, and hence Mead's tone is not as easy and light as Carter's and she openly deals with the problems of falling in love with the wrong person and not being able to have feelings for other, more adequate persons[83]. Since Rose is clearly tormented by this situation, it is easy for readers to feel empathy towards her; from being able to read about her feelings and thoughts, they realise that her feelings for Dimitri are real, and they merely want her to be able to pursue her luck and start a relationship with the guy she really loves because this is probably a thing each one of the readers wishes for.

In addition to the dominant theme of love – which is possibly so dominant because it also plays such a major role in our society and in the lives of the readers – other troubles of adolescence are mentioned, such as the problems of alcohol and drugs in VA. In the beginning of the book, Rose is still a rather irresponsible and immature person; she drinks alcohol and also comes into contact with drugs such as weed (VA 73). She sees these substances as a way to solve her problems and forget about them for a little while: "It was also very likely that I was going to get head-over-heels drunk tonight, which, while not a great way to solve my problems, would at least be really fun. Yeah. My life could be worse" (VA 269). Yet, Mead indicates that a process of maturation has started because in the course of the book, Rose gets more mature and thinks about all her future responsibilities, which then usually prevents herself from taking any foolish actions (VA 202).

Furthermore, the mentioning of elements of popular culture might also contribute to the triggering of identification with the characters. Cammie and her friends indulge in an "annual *Dirty Dancing* extravaganza, where [...] [they] watched the 'nobody puts Baby in a corner' scene a dozen times" (ILY 104) or "a Gilmore Girls marathon" (ILY 165), and are fans of "Brad Pitt" (ILY 172) and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (ILY 178). Since all those elements form part of the popular culture surrounding readers in their everyday lives, they might find it rather easy to relate to the characters because these elements are very similar to their own lives and experiences.

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[83] For Rose's confession of her feelings see VA 142, and for the problem of not being able to just talk oneself into feeling the same for another person, see VA 195.

One phenomenon which can probably be used to show that readers' identification with the books and characters really happens can be seen in our external world: increasingly, readers, fans and addicts of certain books meet at conventions where they dress up as their favourite characters and interchange their ideas, opinions and thoughts on the books, often in the presence of the author of the book. Besides these conventions, one can even visit special theme parks, in which people can really enter the world of their books and characters in person; they can physically move within the world of the books and touch it instead of just entering these worlds mentally by reading the books. Moreover, certain in-groups are built, for instance because of the "existence of the special vocabulary of the Potter books known only to those who read the books" (Tucker 232), and this shows "a significant link between society and literature" (ibid) and the influence which books can have on the lives of their readers.

6. Conclusion

As proposed in the introduction, the present thesis should answer two main questions, namely how reader identification and empathy with the characters is maintained although they obviously differ from their readers, and over all, how the successful concept of the modern SST has been created.

In terms of identification and empathy, one could see that authors still manage to maintain these notions although writing about wizards, vampires and spies, namely by including literary devices such as first-person-narration as well as elements which are universal to the experiences of adolescence, irrespective of whether the adolescents are humans or some kind of supernatural being. Hopefully, it also became clear that identification and empathy are very important in children's literature (and therefore also in the modern SST), because thus, readers can process their own problems and everyday lives by placing them into their fictional worlds, where they can examine them from a safe distance. Since the acknowledgement of their concerns seems to be very important to children, it is probably for this reason that the modern school story has had (and still has) such a success and it is nice to notice that "[f]ictional characters can [still] become mental companions to last a lifetime, and relationships across generations can be built around affection for a character or a fictional world" (Keen xv).

The present success can also be seen in even newer adaptations of the classic model, namely in formats such as the high-school story. In these, students no longer go to a boarding school but to the much more common type of high-school, and these stories have not only been developed in literature but also been adapted to other media such as television (see for instance the highly successful "High School Musical" series). A further examination of this sub-genre of the school story in its various media-forms might be a fascinating topic for future work, since it has not been included in this paper due to the fact that the present thesis tried to look at the modern school story which is more closely connected to the classic SST because of featuring a boarding school setting too.

The second question which should be answered was how the concept of the modern SST had been created and how the successful adaptation to the 21st century had been achieved, because the fact that it has been successful is quite obvious when looking at the role which the SST and its modern adaptations play as a determining factor for economy and industry as well as popular teen culture, and the unbelievable sums of money which are obtained through the help of Harry Potter and Co. every year. The adaptation to the new circumstances of the 21st century has, as the analysis might have shown, often been achieved by the adding of fantastic elements, which offer readers the possibility of wish-fulfilment and escapism while at the same time giving them the opportunity to observe and analyse their lives, conflicts and struggles from a safe distance. What a specific book actually provides for a reader depends, nevertheless, on the individual, their expectations and what they are actually looking for in a book.

Consequently, an author should probably find a compromise between offering escapism and realistic problems to fully satisfy the demands of readers, and the modern SST seems to be the perfect solution for this problem. It offers old-fashioned elements that can be seen as contributing to the escapist notion, while at the same time addressing issues like puberty and growing up, thus allowing readers to look at their own problems from a different angle as well as from a safe distance. To conclude, the modern SST and its popularity might offer the solution to a serious problem, namely the seeming lack of interest of many children in fiction, and should

therefore be highly appreciated for their positive influence on children and their reading habits, because previous experiences with the modern SST have demonstrated that

> young readers [...] can [still] become totally hooked on fiction. Descriptions of children utterly absorbed in a Potter book are very heartening at a time when the joys of reading are so often challenged by other juvenile habits and activities. (Tucker 233)

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8. Index

9. Abstract

The genre of the classic school story was a very popular trend amongst children's literature throughout the 19th and 20th century, and by generally setting them in single-sex boarding schools, these stories reflected the exterior trends of education and schooling. Popular authors like Enid Blyton have introduced many readers to this genre who, like me, were fascinated by the stories and have found many fictional companions amongst the presented characters. Yet, towards the middle and end of the 20th century, the popularity of the genre suddenly declined rapidly, its halcyon days were over, and many critics believed it to be a dead genre. However, as the recent success of books such as Harry Potter has evidently shown, this assumption might have been wrong, or at least the death of the genre was just a terminal one. Therefore, the present thesis should explain how authors such as J.K. Rowling could breathe new life into the old-fashioned and outdated genre and bring its popularity to new heights; and I call the books belonging to this new wave of success 'the modern school story'.

In the theoretical part of my thesis, I try to offer an overview on the classic model of the school story by demonstrating its origins, the development from boys' to girls' stories, and the typical elements of the rather formulaic – and therefore often highly criticised – school story, as well as the attraction of the genre for its readers. In a further chapter of this part, I also introduce the notion of fantasy and fantasy fiction, since I consequently claim that the modern school story owes a big part of its success to the mixture of old and new, or traditional and modern elements, of which many can also be found in the tradition of fantasy literature. By offering some theoretical insights in this first part of my thesis, I want to provide a scientific foundation for the subsequent analysis.

In this second analytical part of my thesis, I examine the relationship of the modern school story with the classic model, and try to detect which elements have been adopted by contemporary authors. At the same time, I also try to identify the transformations and how the genre has been adapted to the new circumstances of the 21st century by looking at the newly added elements. And while many of these elements are of fantastic nature and might thus obstruct the process of reader identification and empathy with the characters, I argue that authors still manage to

create this bond by referring to universal aspects of adolescence which characters share with their readers. I believe that this process is not only a very important aspect to determine the success of the genre, but that it is also highly valuable for the maturation of readers, since children see their fears, concerns and problems acknowledged, and thus they can observe them from a new perspective and process them from a safe distance.

I conclude that the success of the modern school story is very likely to be due to the aforementioned process of identification and empathy, in addition to the mixture of old and new, or familiar and unfamiliar elements, thus illustrating that the modern school story represents an old concept in a new wrapping.

10. Zusammenfassung

Das Genre der klassischen Schulgeschichte repräsentiert einen sehr erfolgreichen und populären Trend im Bereich der Kinderliteratur während des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Da diese Geschichten normalerweise in getrennt-geschlechtlichen Internatsschulen spielten, reflektierten sie zudem die zu der Zeit externen Trends in Erziehung und Schulwesen. Beliebte Autoren wie Enid Blyton haben viele Leser in dieses Genre eingeführt, und diese Leser haben, so wie ich, viele fiktionale Begleiter und Freunde unter den dargebotenen Charakteren gefunden. Gegen Mitte und Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts kam es aber zu einem plötzlichen und raschen Abfall in der Beliebtheit des Genres, dessen glorreiche Tage vorbei zu sein schienen, und viele Kritiker glaubten, dass das Genre tot wäre. Nichtsdestotrotz hat der Erfolg der in den letzten Jahren erschienenen Schulgeschichten (deren populärster Vertreter wohl Harry Potter ist) gezeigt, dass diese Annahme möglicherweise falsch war, oder dass der Tod des Genres zumindest nur ein temporärer war. Daher soll diese Diplomarbeit erklären, wie Autoren wie J.K. Rowling das altmodische und obsolete Genre wiederbeleben und zu neuen Höhen führen konnten, und alle Bücher die zu dieser neuen Erfolgswelle der Schulgeschichte zählen, fasse ich unter dem Begriff der „modernen Schulgeschichte" zusammen.

Im theoretischen Teil meiner Arbeit versuche ich einen Überblick über das klassische Modell der Schulgeschichte darzubieten, indem ich die Ursprünge des Genres, die Entwicklung von Jungen- zu Mädchen-Geschichten und die typischen Elemente des eher formelhaften – und deswegen oft stark kritisierten – Genres betrachte, genauso wie den Reiz des Genres für seine Leser. In einem weiteren Kapitel dieses Teiles erwähne ich auch den Gegenstand der Fantasie sowie fantastische Literatur, da ich in der Folge behaupte, dass die moderne Schulgeschichte einen großen Teil ihres Erfolges der Vermischung von alten und neuen, oder auch traditionellen und modernen Elementen verdankt, von welchen viele auch in der Tradition der fantastischen Literatur gefunden werden können. Diese theoretischen Einblicke sollen eine wissenschaftliche Grundlage für meine spätere Analyse gewähren.

In diesem zweiten analytischen Teil meiner Diplomarbeit untersuche ich die Beziehung zwischen der modernen Schulgeschichte und dem klassischen Modell und versuche, die ähnlichen Elemente herauszufiltern. Gleichzeitig versuche ich aber

auch, die Transformationen und neu hinzugefügten Elemente zu identifizieren um dadurch herauszufinden, wie das Genre für das 21. Jahrhundert adaptiert wurde. Während viele dieser Elemente fantastischer Natur sind und daher den Prozess der Leseridentifikation und Empathie mit den Charakteren möglicherweise erschweren oder gar verhindern könnten argumentiere ich, dass Autoren es trotzdem schaffen eine Verbindung zwischen Lesern und Charakteren herzustellen, indem sie universale Aspekte der Jugend hinzufügen, welche die Mitglieder beider Gruppen betreffen. Ich bin der Meinung, dass dieser Prozess der Identifikation und Empathie-Entwicklung nicht nur wichtig für den Erfolg des Genres, sondern auch für den Reifeprozess der individuellen Leser ist, da Kinder ihre Ängste, Zweifel und Probleme in diesen Büchern wiederfinden und diese daher aus einer anderen Perspektive betrachten und aus einer sicheren Distanz verarbeiten können.

Ich komme daher zu dem Schluss, dass der Erfolg der modernen Schulgeschichte höchstwahrscheinlich auf den bereits erwähnten Prozess der Identifikation und Empathie, sowie auf die Mischung aus alten und neuen, vertrauten und unbekannten Elementen zurückzuführen ist, und schließe somit mit der Betrachtung, dass die moderne Schulgeschichte ein altes Konzept in neuer Verpackung präsentiert.

11. Curriculum vitae

Name:	Lisa Maria Cerar
Geboren:	10.06.1988 in Linz
Staatsbürgerschaft:	Österreich
Eltern:	Josef und Margareta Cerar (geb. Schütz)
E-Mail:	Lisa_Cerar@gmx.at

Ausbildung

Februar 2011 – April 2011	Diplomarbeitsphase
Oktober 2006 – Jänner 2011	Lehramtsstudium Englisch / Spanisch an der Universität Wien
Juni 2006	Maturaabschluss mit ausgezeichnetem Erfolg
September 1998 – Mai 2006	Bundesrealgymnasium Auhof in Linz

Zusatzausbildung

März 2008 – Juni 2011	Absolvierung des Moduls Deutsch als Fremdsprache / Deutsch als Zweitsprache an der Universität Wien

Auslandsaufenthalte

Juli – September 2010	Aufenthalt in Valencia (Spanien) als private Deutschlehrerin
Juli – September 2009	Aufenthalt in Valencia (Spanien) als private Deutschlehrerin
Juli – September 2008	Au pair Aufenthalt in Portumna (Co. Galway, Irland)

Berufserfahrung

März 2011 – laufend	Schülerhilfe Wien
	Deutsch-, Englisch- und Spanisch-Nachhilfe