

BIRTHING AN ARCHETYPE:
WAR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE EPIC CHILD HERO

by

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ABSTRACT

Carl Jung suggests that archetypes are created for a specific purpose; they are not merely nebulous figures which were once imposed upon characters in stories, but were instead born in times of need in direct response to that need. In this dissertation, I identify and define a new heroic archetype that I have named the Epic Child Hero, and I trace its origin and evolution from World War II into the twenty-first century, from its earliest appearances in the forms of Tolkien's Hobbits and Lewis's Pevensie siblings to its later incarnations found in British, Japanese, and American children's literature.

It is my contention that the Epic Child Hero is a legitimate new archetype, separate from other archetypes such as the Hero, the Shadow, or the Divine Child, and that it has its own history and function. Born in a time of uncertainty when people had begun questioning even the traditional hero figure, the Epic Child Hero presented itself as a *tabula rasa*, a character that could carry the hope of the future while also bearing the burden of the past. Like their adult predecessors, Epic Child Heroes are protagonists of epic stories, and though they accomplish great feats of strength, courage, or intellect, it is their youth that equips and qualifies them as heroes above any other quality. Therefore, their tasks must be completed before they officially reach adulthood, for when they grow up, they lose their heroic status, and it is their childhood that is the sacrifice for their cause.

The Epic Child Hero archetype emerged from the collective unconscious in historically unique circumstances made possible by astonishing advancements in the technology of the twentieth century, and it reflects the social, moral, psychological,

political, and cultural concerns brought about by two global wars, a crippling economic collapse, the breakdown of global European empires, and the rise of postmodernism. Because of this, the Epic Child Hero is a powerful witness to the history of the twentieth century and stands as permanent tribute to what humanity has wrought.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE EPIC CHILD HERO ARCHETYPE

The archetypal hero is perhaps the most ubiquitous literary character throughout history and in all cultures. A figure whose virtues are forged in the flames of war, the epic hero is invincible, powerful, and most importantly, noble despite any flaws. In his seminal work on the heroic archetype, Joseph Campbell says,

But the makers of legend have seldom rested content to regard the world's great heroes as mere human beings who broke past the horizons that limited their fellows and returned with such boons as any man with equal faith and courage might have found. On the contrary, the tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception. The whole hero-life is shown to have been a pageant of marvels with the great central adventure as its culmination.

This accords with the view that herohood is predestined, rather than simply achieved[.] (274-5)

This hero, then, is called from birth, and he or she can and must rise above the constraints which bind ordinary people in order to achieve greatness. Everything in his or her life works together to make this achievement possible, and furthermore, no one else could possibly achieve the same outcomes as the hero will achieve.

Prior to the twentieth century, the standard epic heroes in literature and mythology were adult males: the Greek Odysseus, the Babylonian Gilgamesh, the Hebrew Samson, and countless others represent the archetype throughout time. These heroes were known for feats of intellect such as Odysseus's tricking the Cyclops,

Polyphemus; feats of perseverance such as Gilgamesh's search for Utnapishtim; or feats of strength such as Samson's destruction of the Philistine temple. These classic mythological heroes were each distinct and memorable, serving as inspiration to men facing dark times of their own. Any imperfections such as pride, lust, or anger that they possessed dimmed considerably in the light of their glorious victories over their enemies, and ultimately, their honor must be upheld at all costs, and their causes must always be noble, righteous, and just so as to best inspire the ordinary men who would later hear the myths of their feats repeated around campfires for generations to come.

As Northrop Frye asserts, “[i]n terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire” (136). The traditional epic hero, is, therefore, a representation of a human paragon: a man who is both fully human in his nature, yet who is also superior to his humanity in his abilities. This archetype provides humans with an ideal to which they can aspire and a role model whom they are encouraged to emulate. This traditional ideal of the super man is hugely reflective of the values of pre-twentieth century society: man is to be the leader of the home and the nation, and he is to be a mighty warrior who is honorable, noble, righteous, and just. Whatever flaws he possesses must be overlooked because of his superiority in those areas.

In the twentieth century, however, the myth of the super man starts to break down. With the first half of the century dominated and thus defined by two global wars, a crippling economic collapse, the breakdown of the once-great European empires, and the emergence of a strong female voice in Western cultures, the myth of the epic male superhero began to lose both its appeal and its relevance. In Western Europe, two

generations of men had spent time away from home while engaged in World War I and World War II, and while they were gone, women had stepped into roles traditionally held by men and began working outside of the home en masse for the first time in history, filling positions in everything from the factories to the baseball fields.

The birth of the twentieth century also brought with it a new school of philosophical thought, which came to be known as modernism. Robert Paul Resch states that "the modernist had no doubt that the world existed and that, however complicated it had become, knowledge of it was not only possible, it was being produced at a dizzying pace" (513-14) and that "the modernist felt that with this knowledge it was possible to criticize the existing state of affairs and change it for the better Modernism was socially as well as intellectually progressive" (514). He contrasts this to postmodernism, which began to gain popularity during the mid-twentieth century. Resch states that postmodernism "defines itself in relation to the failure of modernism in order to divert attention from its own irrationalist and politically dubious ancestry, and perhaps to mask its ongoing negative dependency upon modernism as well" (515), though he prefers to define it as being "a synthesis of epistemological relativism, ontological irrationalism, ethical nihilism, aesthetic populism, and political pessimism" (515). What this means is that while early twentieth century philosophy saw the changing world and approached it with caution, but that by the middle of the twentieth century, had begun to evolve into something more negative and perhaps even sinister.

In her examination of modernism, postmodernism, and what she terms "post-apocalyptic culture," Theresa Heffernan makes this point: "[f]or many modernists, the

idea of History as a collective and forward-moving process is displaced by the sense of a loss of purpose and a fear that there is no overall direction" (59). She illustrates this by stating, "The belief in the march of civilization is dealt a severe blow with the Great World War, a barbarous event that explodes right in the heart of Europe" (59). It is her theory that the twentieth century, with all of its early cultural and political upheaval, was afflicted with the fear that "the actual or imminent end of the world as foretold in Revelation" (4) and then "receded with the rise of modernity" (4), implying that the old world receded right along with it. Heffernan suggests that "we live in a time after the apocalypse, after the faith in a radically new world, of revelation, of unveiling" (6), and that "[m]any modernists feel in some way not only that the catastrophe has already happened but also the 'sense of an ending,' implicit in the narratives of modernity, is, for various reason, no longer viable. In other words, it no longer secures the dream of the future" (8). She concludes with the thought that,

[i]f the twentieth century begins with a sense of exhaustion and frustration with the end as revelation, at its turn, the Apocalypse—with its strange pleasure in the catastrophic cleansing of the world, its reassuring division between the righteous and the damned, and its disturbing comfort in knowing absolute finality and order—dramatically reasserts itself. (150)

Heffernan utilizes a clever metaphor to describe the socio-cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism, providing a resonating image of their philosophical differences. Taken in conjunction with Resch's definitions of both philosophies, it is clear that the early and mid-twentieth century were times of great upheaval, and James V. Mehl suggests that

"[i]t is still too early to assert with any certainty the meaning and significance of the postmodern movement" (406). What we can assert, however, is the fact that in keeping with Heffernan's theory, we are presently living in a culturally post-apocalyptic world, which suggests that we are also living in a time of rebirth, which presents us with the opportunity to create a new world to leave for future generations, and I contend that redefining the role of the heroic archetype is one significant way that we have already done so.

As modernism questioned the rapidly-changing power structure, and postmodernism completely dismantled it, the conventional and accepted definition of the Western "hero" also began to change in nations ravaged by war. The traditional hero became flawed, broken, and lost: the morality he once upheld was questioned, as were his values and even his role in society. Veterans were unsettled by the horrors of the battlefield, horrors which had been magnified and made worse than they had ever been because of the ever-evolving nature of chemical warfare, weapons of mass destruction, and, by the second war, flight. Michael Livingston notes Ben Shephard's observation that these new tools of warfare even caused "the term 'shell-shock' [to be] coined in February 1915 by Dr. C. S. Myers on the battlefields of the First World War" (82). "Shell-shock," what is now referred to as Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome or Disorder, was a grave concern for these veterans: "The earliest doctors to study Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder found that symptoms could last anywhere from months to years, and that the cause of the condition, not surprisingly, was the experience of a disturbing trauma that led to persisting recollections of that trauma over long periods of time" (Livingston 83).

This made reintegrating into normal life a difficult task for many returning veterans, who were left questioning their own actions taken in war, just as they were questioned by their own people, who had, for perhaps the first time in generations, seen war come to their own homelands.

The high cost of two wars also affected Western Europe's empire-building in Africa and Asia. As more money was funneled into warfare, there were fewer funds left to maintain colonial governments around the world, and over time, the indigenous people of those occupied nations began to resist foreign control to reestablish their own sovereignty. The economic disasters also led to the breaking down of the traditional social structures in Western nations as well; for example, in England, aristocratic families found themselves having to close and sell their family estates, leading to the decline of positions "in service" for the members of the lower classes dependent upon these estates for their livelihoods. More members of the lower classes were opting to pursue their own education and upwardly mobile careers, resulting in a migration from rural villages to more urban centers. With the women of these nations gainfully employed and unwilling to resume traditional roles in the home, empowered by a new sense of independence and capability and encouraged by the writings of authors such as Virginia Woolf, the values of keeping a traditional domestic life were also being questioned, meaning that there were no social or cultural settings left unaffected by change.

In the realms of religion and philosophy, nineteenth-century philosophers such as Nietzsche had begun questioning the role of religion and the place of God in society while others such as Marx had questioned traditional governmental power structures.

Post-modern literature is characterized by a lack of definitive ideals and is instead full of protagonists who question tradition, structure, and the ethics of earlier generations.

Works by women and writers from non-Western countries became more available, and the traditional hero began to be replaced by heroes that did not necessarily look like their traditional forebears, much less share their traditional values.

By the end of the second world war, the myth of the epic male superhero remained a prominent and popular figure primarily in the literature of one nation: the United States of America, where the comic book genre flourished:

In the early 1940s, consumers purchased fifteen million comic books monthly from over a hundred running series, culminating in about 180 million comic books purchased annually. But added to this is the estimate that each comic book passed through four or five people's hands on average. That would add up to more than 750 million readings of comic books when the US population was just over 133 million people. (Eaton 33)

This is perhaps somewhat attributable to the fact that the country went into the war to retaliate for attacks on the military stationed in Pearl Harbor and later emerged from World War II triumphant on two fronts and was not only largely unscathed by the horrors which had painted over the landscapes of Europe and parts of Asia. It is also largely attributable to the fact that comic book heroes were used extensively in military propaganda campaigns to elicit support for the war even before Pearl Harbor (Eaton 33). When the war served to revitalize the economy and recharge national spirit, the comic book hero reflected the new confidence of an emerging superpower. As Julian Chambliss,

William Svitavsky, and Thomas Donaldson explain, "Superheroes have been traditionally committed to being the literary champions of 'Truth, Justice and the American Way.' In protecting the 'American Way,' the superhero is empowered to promote all that is best about the United States" (3). Furthermore, the superhero was a versatile figure. John Donovan explains that the American comic hero emerged to fill a social need and has adapted with time to reflect the shifting concerns of society.

The comic book superhero was created in the late 1930s as the embodiment of what is "Good" in the battle against "Evil." Throughout World War II, superheroes were depicted in comics fighting America's Nazi enemies, with no doubt as to who were the "good guys" and who were the "bad guys." After 1945, during the first 20 years of the Cold War, "Evil" was portrayed by the Communists; American superheroes fought them in the harbors of New York, in the labs of nuclear scientists, in the jungles of Vietnam, and even on the moon. (56).

From there, he explores how new heroes or new versions of older heroes have continued to take on traditional villains as well as those more concerned with social justice issues, including illegal drug use, racism, abuse, and feminism (87).

Thus, Superman, Captain America, Spiderman: the newly rejuvenated mythic superhero figure had a home in the popular graphic literature of the USA, as did, to a lesser extent, their female counterparts such as Wonder Woman, one of the few female heroes who was not a "-girl" or "-woman" version of a male hero. With the rise of television and the popularity of film in the post-war era, other heroes that enjoyed a surge

in popularity were businessmen, cowboys, and soldiers as Americans were encouraged to get back to work, embrace the independent pioneering spirit, and to revere their nation. By the 1960s, however, the disillusionment of post-modernism had begun creeping into the American psyche, and that, combined with the struggles of the Civil Rights movement and the fear of impending nuclear war with Russia, was soon reflected in popular culture as well. Finally, the Vietnam War brought with it the complete disillusionment of postmodernism that had been affecting European pop culture since World War II. The "Justice League" heroes of the 1940s found competition from the "Avengers" of the 1960s (a battle still ongoing fifty years later), and in general, the superheroes of the previous generation became more human and, therefore, more flawed in nature, echoing the shifting cultural values of the post-war generation.

However, in two other nations, Great Britain and Japan, World War II did not inspire the creation and adoption of superheroes as evidenced by their absence in post-war literature and popular culture. While the United States certainly contributed soldiers and resources to the war effort, most Americans themselves were far removed from the physical realities of combat and the destruction of prolonged bombing campaigns. The war had also allowed America to enter into a period of economic recovery after the Great Depression, thus raising the standard of living for many average citizens. Americans were able to view the events of the war from a comfortable distance, in a time of gain rather than lack, and with the mindset that they were providing assistance to those nations who could not stand alone against the Axis powers. All of these things factor into the increasing popularity of the superhero figure in war-time America. However, the war was

a much more present reality for citizens of England and Japan. In addition to the human cost of war, both nations were damaged on the home fronts and, therefore, each of these nations was faced with rebuilding after the war. In addition, not only had they suffered a great loss of life and catastrophic physical damages from bombings, they had both also been forced to face the end of their Imperial dreams. These combined losses resulted in a period of national introspection and contemplation for both the United Kingdom and Japan as their leaders began the process of redefining their national "mission statements" and deciding what future paths they would need to take to recover from the war.

Despite these things, the spirit of the British people was not broken, and their sense of national pride at having weathered the storm of the war is still apparent in their literature and popular culture well into the twenty-first century. The heroes of post-war Britain were the people themselves—people who had endured the bombings and rationing and loss in a way that the Americans had not. They were able to celebrate their own ingenuity and perseverance rather than projecting heroism onto the figure of the nameless veteran, represented in American culture by the superhero. On the other side of the world, however, Japan faced a very different outcome at the end of the war. Having entered combat with the intentions of building an empire of its own, after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan's spirit was broken as it admitted defeat and marked the site of the Hiroshima bombings with a memorial which in translation states, "We shall not repeat the error."¹ The lasting effects of the war and its horrific ending are also apparent in Japanese literature and popular culture. While the British relive the war so as

¹ Hiroshima Peace Memorial

to pay tribute to the indomitable British spirit, the Japanese often condemn those who would make war in the first place and are concerned with the aftereffects of doing so.

What has evolved in both cultures, on both island nations so far apart in philosophy and geography, is a new version of the archetypal hero, one unique to this postmodern world. While America adopted the figure of the traditional adult male superhero in the forms of characters such as Superman or Captain America as its new cultural icon after World War II, Britain and Japan looked to a new kind of hero, one that evolved as a result of loss and shame, meant to demonstrate that even in the midst of despair, there will always be hope. This hero is the Epic Child Hero, modeled on the archetypal heroes of ancient, epic poems and myths but unique in its purpose and origin and thus worthy of distinction as a separate archetype. Like their adult predecessors, the Epic Child Heroes are protagonists of epic stories, and they accomplish great feats of strength, courage, or intellect. Unlike the classical archetypal heroes, however, they are not especially gifted in those areas. Instead, their youth is what equips and qualifies them as heroes above any other ability or quality.

The earliest version of the Epic Child Hero is found in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*; the diminutive and youthful Hobbits literally carry the hopes of their entire world as they journey from their little Shire and fight their way across the war-torn Middle-earth to destroy the mightiest of enemies. C.S. Lewis picked up the thread of this thought and introduced us to the Pevensie children, who must also face and defeat an unearthly evil of incredible power. Flash forward fifty years, and we see J.K. Rowling's child hero Harry Potter locked in mortal combat with Lord Voldemort, and Phillip

Pullman's Lyra Belaqua tasked with unraveling the fabric of religion itself, facing enemies infinitely more powerful than she. On the other side of the world, the protagonists of many post-apocalyptic Japanese tales are also children or adolescents, and as the twenty-first century has dawned, two of those protagonists have emerged as distinctive in that they, like their British counterparts, must also face enemies of superior ability and power while they are still children themselves: Uzumaki Naruto of the long-running *shōnen* manga *Naruto* and Kurosaki Ichigo, the teenage protagonist of the *shōnen* manga *Bleach*. Both Naruto and Ichigo are cast as the only ones who can save their world, and in both series, the villains are men who aspire to become gods themselves. In American literature, the first version of the Epic Child Hero is Ender Wiggin, the post-Vietnam era protagonist of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, though Card did not intend for children or young adults to be his target audience. Another example of the American version of the Epic Child Hero is Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games trilogy, who must serve as the face of a revolution to bring down a despotic government. Ender and Katniss are both heroes and pawns, controlled and directed by adults who recognize the power of their youth. All of these heroes are the result of a traumatic national injury: in Britain and Japan, that injury was World War II. In America, it was two separate events, the Vietnam War, when most American citizens were first confronted with the brutal realities of war via their television news programs, and 9/11, when the destruction of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon buildings brought the reality and fear of war to their own soil for the first time.

Prior to World War II, the child hero in literature was unique in character and personality but also merely the hero of his or her own personal adventure. For example, Wendy in her Neverland, Dorothy in her Oz, or Alice in her Wonderland—these early child heroes traveled to other worlds that existed with or without them, and while they had adventures which benefited the people of the other world as to be expected of heroes, none of the them were required to *save* an entire world. However, newer post-war child heroes are shouldered with monumental responsibility: if they fail, worlds will end. Everything depends on the outcome of the choices and actions of the child heroes—and what is more, the battles do and must take place before these children reach the age of majority. The Pevensie children must keep their childlike natures to have access to Narnia; Harry Potter must defeat Voldemort before the completion of his final school term and his eighteenth birthday, and Lyra must be a child so that she may sacrifice her innocence in exchange for the salvation she is seeking. Naruto and Ichigo are both fifteen when they enter into battle, but again, only they are capable of defeating the enemy and saving their worlds, and their age gifts them with fresh optimism and perspective that their elders and betters do not share, and it is only by accepting the more egalitarian beliefs of the adolescents that the adults are able to assist them in overcoming the threats.

What distinguishes these child heroes is not only their roles as protagonists in otherwise adult epics but also a concrete list of requirements that must be met for them to qualify as an official Epic Child Hero as opposed to being merely protagonists in fantasy stories. The commonalities of these characters serve to help in plotting the universal template of this emerging archetype. Some of the archetypal markers that these characters

share include the fact that each must be physically different (i.e., age, size, scars) in some way from his or her peers. Also, each is a minor child who is independent from parental oversight—these heroes are either orphaned or estranged from their parents, or they are the children of single parents who are unable to care for them because of extenuating circumstances such as employment or mental deficiency. In place of close familial relationships, these epic child heroes form surrogate families or otherwise binding relationships with two or more peers that keep them in touch with normalcy and drive them forward in their quests. In place of parents, in addition to having particular yet emotionally distant adult mentors who serve as inspirations to them, these heroes also require several specialized adult teachers or guides who help them along their paths. They also must possess an innate desire to do what they perceive to be right, honorable, and just in the face of overwhelming adversity; each must be inherently *good* and innocent, for each must be pitted against a violent, overwhelming, and supernatural *adult* enemy that is beyond his or her ability to overcome, and yet still somehow the child hero must overcome it, preferably by using a virtue such as love which the evil entity cannot understand; and each must be able to master his or her own fears and bring salvation to the human race *while still a child*. Ultimately, the final identifying mark of epic child heroes is their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the beliefs they hold dear and possibly for the lives of their friends and (usually surrogate) families. These child heroes are not simply heroes of their own backyard tales—they are chosen, marked, and given the overwhelmingly difficult task of saving a world, from Narnia or Oxford, to Karakura

Town or Konaha of the Fire Country, and even to the distant future in the far reaches of the Milky Way or the post-apocalyptic nation of Panem.

That the epic child hero is a popular new archetype is indisputable. However, there are some serious questions regarding the cultural significance of this new archetype: why is it that authors have created these characters, and why is it that they have gained such mass appeal amongst child, adolescent, and adult audiences? It is my belief that closely examining the primary texts which feature these heroes will reveal that the growing fear of unrestrained warfare and of the nations with access to powerful weapons of mass destruction, which began in the first half of the twentieth century and has persisted into the twenty-first century, has made manifest an intrinsic human need to believe that (1) children and adolescents are capable of fighting the battles that adults cannot fight and (2) that it is only through these children that the world may ultimately be made safe. However, these texts also establish that though the children are the heroes, it is still not left to them to be in charge of the worlds that they save. Those tasks are better left to others more suited for ruling; once the heroes have fulfilled their purpose and sacrificed themselves to the cause, they are to retire quietly and allow the adults to go about the business of governance. This leads me to ask a deeper question: why is it that it is culturally acceptable to cast literary children and adolescents as figureheads to adult revolutions, only to cast them aside once their work has been done? The child heroes' own desires notwithstanding—as most of them have no desire for power themselves, especially after seeing the truth of the maxim that “absolute power corrupts absolutely”—why are they given the responsibility of destroying evil but are left out of the business of

governing the new world once the present threat is removed? I believe the answer lies in this: these child heroes obviously represent the best of humanity—the ones who stand up and fight for what is good and right and who are unfettered by the chains of adulthood. They do not have to worry about how they will provide for their families when they lose their jobs for making their stand; they do not have to fear social recrimination and ostracism because they are already outsiders and loners who are strong enough to take the abuse. They are innocent enough to believe right will always overcome wrong, and they are pure enough not to use their own power for evil. At the same time, because they are outsiders and loners, unattached to and not responsible for an official family unit, they are somewhat expendable. With no one waiting at home for them, no one needs them to provide; they may wander into danger alone because they *are* alone. Once they serve their purpose, they are also free to disappear, or die—as Katniss realizes, she is of more use to Coin dead than alive, as a martyred Mockingjay would only help secure Coin's own power.

To fully understand the creation and evolution of the epic child hero archetype, it is important to understand how the archetype fits into a greater literary paradigm, thus making it essential to examine certain critical voices. In a discussion of archetypes and the fantastic, mention must be made of the writings of Northrop Frye, Rosemary Jackson, and of course, the seminal studies of Joseph Campbell's hero. Campbell's analysis of the heroic archetype encompasses both the psychological and mythological aspects of heroism and the hero, deeming the creation of the hero myth as a necessary part of the collective human psychology. He describes the archetypal hero as being a "man of self-

achieved submission” (11); and he claims that “[o]nly birth can conquer death—the birth, not of the old thing again, but of something new” (11), warning that without that regeneration, “doom breaks from the shell of our very virtue. Peace then is a snare; war is a snare; change is a snare; permanence a snare” (12). The message is clear: without change and rebirth, there is no continuance, no movement forward. The hero’s journey is representative of humanity’s journey; his rebirth is a just a step forward in human evolution. For the hero to be a success, he must die and be reborn and then return to world he left so that those remaining there might learn and grow from his heroic deeds.

Campbell states:

the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those casual zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case (i.e., give battle to the nursery demons of his local culture) and break through to the undistorted, direct experiences and assimilation of what C.G. Jung has called “the archetypal images.” (12)

Once the hero has accomplished his first assignment and is elevated to a higher plane, he must subsequently fulfill the second assignment as well, and thus Campbell concludes that the journey of the hero in some ways serves as a collective wish fulfillment:

The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one’s visions, ideas, and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the

present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man; but as eternal man—perfected, unspecific, universal man—he has been reborn. His second solemn task and deed therefore . . . is to return then to us, transfigured, and teach the lesson he has learned of life renewed. (14-5)

This approach to the creation and development of the original hero archetype will frame the present discussion regarding the creation and development of the epic child hero archetype by posing the following question: If the hero archetype and the hero's journey from normalcy to transfiguration serve as a way to move humanity forward, what does it mean that the new heroic figure that has emerged in the twentieth century is no longer the powerful adult male of old but is now a small, seemingly powerless child?

Campbell theorizes that “It is the business of mythology proper, and of the fairy tale, to reveal the specific dangers and techniques of the dark interior way from tragedy to comedy. Hence the incidents are fantastic and ‘unreal’: they represent psychological, not physical triumphs” (21). He deems that the function of a myth is necessary to navigate through tragedies played out on local and global stages, concluding that the success of a hero will bring about personal and cultural redemption, and, “[l]ike happy families, the myths and the worlds redeemed are all alike” (22). Does this mean, then, that the collective adult society has abdicated the role of hero, passing the burden of redemption on to the next generation of children and adolescents, or is it an admission of fear or guilt—fear that we have finally gone too far, and guilt for doing so? By exploring the role Campbell's hero and the heroic journey in the context of its relation to the epic child

hero in this and subsequent chapters, it will perhaps be possible to begin to answer this question with confidence and to open a discussion of what the appearance of these new young heroes means in a larger literary framework.

One of the most important implications of the appearance of the epic child hero archetype is that each example of the archetype is the center of a unique fantasy world, each one with its own mythology and lore. The authors of the stories featuring the epic child hero are also sophisticated worldbuilders; they do not situate their protagonists in the readers' world, even when their fantasy worlds exist alongside it, building a fantasy world around their protagonists instead. While these fantasy worlds often do exist alongside the "real" world, they remain separate, complex, and complete in and of themselves. For example, J.K. Rowling's wizarding world exists in our own modern world, but it is not of this world in that the wizards have their own history, their own government, their own holidays and traditions, their own sports, and their own mythologies. The fact that they must share space with the muggle world is merely happenstance for them; the muggle world is something that, for the most part, they work around or co-exist with out of necessity, but most wizards do not actively participate in muggle culture. Other worlds, such as Collins' Panem or Card's future-Earth are self-contained and identifiable as future versions of the "real" world, but do not share space with a different reality such as the wizarding world since those imaginary future worlds serve as fantasy landscapes themselves.

To create and sustain a fantasy world where the epic child hero will exist, an author must create a mythology for that world, so that the hero may be given a destiny

which he or she will then fulfill. According to Northrop Frye, “a world of myth [is] an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience. In terms of narrative, myth is the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire” (136). Frye's analysis of mythic structure and purpose provides an historical and literary justification for the creation and evolution of a new heroic archetype so late in human history by examining the relationship of myth and literature:

This affinity between the mythical and the abstractly literary illuminates many aspects of fiction, especially the more popular fiction which is realistic enough to be plausible in its incidents and yet romantic enough to be a “good story,” which means a clearly designed one. The introduction of an omen or portent, or the device of making a whole story the fulfilment [*sic*] of a prophecy given at the beginning, is an example. Such a device suggests, in its existential projection, a conception of an ineluctable fate or hidden omnipotent will. Actually, it is a piece of purely literary design, giving the beginning some symmetrical relationship with the end[.] (139)

In each story featuring an epic child hero, we see this sort of structuring: there is generally a prophecy (The Chronicles of Narnia, Harry Potter, Naruto) or a portentous event (His Dark Materials, Bleach, The Hunger Games, Ender's Game) which heralds or enables the birth of a special child. The child hero is the center of the new mythology, and everything revolves around him or her. Readers are compelled to take a journey with the child, which will inevitably be resolved with the positive fulfillment of the original

prophecy. The author's world must be both realistic enough to relate to a human audience and yet still offer enough fantastical elements which appeal to the desire to fulfill a human need, which in the case of the epic child hero is a need to believe in the future of humanity itself, even in the face of an ever-changing and increasingly dangerous world.

Rosemary Jackson views fantasy as a subversive form of literature, stating that “[i]ts association with imagination and with desire has made it an area difficult to articulate or to define” (1). This is somewhat in opposition to Northrop Frye's detailed and structured analysis of myth, but it is important to note that while fantasy certainly utilizes mythology, and even calls for the invention of mythology, it is something beyond both mythology and romance as it often pertains to very realistic material that happens to be set in the fantastic rather than the mundane. Fantasy is full of war, disease, hunger, poverty, and other topics not suited for the romance genre. Jackson comments that traditional scholarship labels fantasy as “‘transcending' reality, 'escaping' the human condition and constructing superior alternate, 'secondary' worlds” (2), and states that “this notion of fantasy literature as fulfilling a desire for a 'better', more complete, unified reality has come to dominate readings of the fantastic, defining it as an art form providing vicarious gratification” (2). From this, Jackson launches her own investigation of the fantasy genre as a social narrative, proposing that fantasies perform one of two functions: “it can *tell of*, manifest or show desire . . . or it can *expel* desire, when this desire when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity” (3-4; italics in original). She further states that if fantasy successfully performs both functions at once, then it “opens up, for a brief moment, on to disorder, on to illegality, on to that

which lies outside the law, that which is outside the dominant value systems. The fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over, and made 'absent'" (4). This is something which is evidenced in each of the stories featuring an epic child hero. The worlds in each of the stories are unbalanced, mirroring the worlds of the readers. Societies, governments, and religions are in disarray; powers are shifting, and ultimately it is the duty of the child heroes to set things to right, which is something that can only occur in a fantasy story. As Jackson says, "Fantasy is not to do with inventing another non-human world: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting the elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* 'new', absolutely 'other' and different" (8; italics in original).

The works of Campbell, Frye, and Jackson are essential for establishing the legitimacy of the epic child hero archetype as well as for establishing the cultural and literary context which demanded its creation. Working with their theories of the hero, the myth, and the fantasy, the question of how and why this has become such an important part of children's and adolescent literature in the twentieth century can begin to be explored and discussed in a meaningful way that will allow me to define the epic child hero and introduce it as a legitimate archetype in its own right.

There is another question which must also be addressed in this discussion—the question of precisely how and why this figure has appeared in children's and adolescent fantasy literature and not in adult literature. To answer this question, I will turn to critics such as Perry Nodelman, Jacqueline Rose, Beverly Lyon Clark, and Peter Hunt to

examine the very definition and purpose of children's and adolescent fiction in our modern literary canon. In my close examinations of the epic child hero in subsequent chapters, I will also reference several other critics who have voiced specific concerns regarding how these heroes have been exploited by adult characters within the texts themselves and address the question of the expectations of adult authors and readers for both the epic child hero as well as for the child audience. There are some concerning trends which must be noted and discussed, including the propensity for adult characters to call upon the epic child heroes to sacrifice their innocence and then to create a situation that strongly encourages or even forces their acquiescence.

In her case study of *Peter Pan* as a representative piece of children's literature, Jacqueline Rose argues

Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written . . . but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child. Children's fiction is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristic of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between. . . .

Children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child *in*. (1-2; italics in original)

In light of the problematic adult-child relationships between the adult characters in the epic child hero stories and the children themselves, this interpretation of children's

literature is intriguing as it reframes the question of why this new archetype has emerged as such a popular figure in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. These stories place a large burden of responsibility upon their child protagonists, and as I will discuss in detail in subsequent chapters, once these epic child heroes achieve their goals, the adults in their stories resume the reins of power over them. Aside from the idea that children enjoy these child-hero stories because they imagine themselves as and aspire to become great heroes for the moment, there then remains this question as to why adult authors are framing stories which arguably serve as metaphors for large, unsolvable adult problems as adventures for children to undertake and resolve largely on their own. Rose contends that “[c]hildren’s fiction emerges, therefore, out of a conception of both the child and the world as knowable in a direct and unmediated way” (9), citing examples of the fairy tale and the boy’s adventure story, concluding that,

in both cases is the idea which [the fairy tale and the adventure story] share of a primitive or lost state to which the child has special access. The child is . . . something of a pioneer who restores these worlds to us, and gives them back to us with a facility or directness which ensures that our own experience to them is, finally, safe. (9)

It is this idea which frames my own discussion of the role the epic child hero plays in contemporary children’s literature and some of the problems that arise between both adult and child characters as well as between adult and child writer and audience.

Peter Hunt’s discussion of children’s literature and its audience is somewhat more pragmatic than Rose’s. Her theory asserts that children’s literature is perhaps not purely

for children. Hunt, on the other hand, bypasses the heavily theoretical ideologies of Rose and instead makes the assumption that children's literature is a legitimate genre which is as easily dissected and examined as any other might be. He examines the qualities and characteristics of books which are labeled "children's literature" and explores how children's literature is read and received in the larger community. Hunt explains how adults approach children's literature and engage with it as independent members of that reading audience: "When adults find themselves reading children's books, they usually have to read in four different ways, simultaneously. First . . . adults commonly read children's books *as if they were peer-texts*. If we read for anything except pleasure, then we will register the presence of, but 'read against' the implied readership" (46; italics in original). What this means is that adult readers can comfortably situate themselves as members of the intended reading audience when engaging with the text. Another way of reading, according to Hunt, is to approach the text with a more critical eye, which situates adult readers outside of the intended reading audience: "More rarely, but increasingly, the adult may be reading the text *with an eye to discussing it with other adults*. The analytic eye may then be dominant, and we may not become engaged with the book, as in the first way of reading" (47; italics in original). These varied ways of reading, according to Hunt, allow for adults to retain a separation between themselves and the text; the children's book, then, is something Other and, worse, *less than*. Hunt contends that there is only one way an adult reader of children's texts can enjoy them for what they are, and that is if the adult can accept the role of the implied reader; "for then the reader will *surrender to the*

book on its own terms. This is as close as we can get to *reading as a child*" (48; italics in original).

Hunt's effort to explicate the reading process of the adult reader who is reading children's literature highlights just how difficult it is to determine the motivations of both the adult readers and authors. In texts featuring an epic child hero, the determination of the adult author and the expectations of the adult reader are important, since examining those things will provide insight to how this archetype has come to be. Equally important is the child reader's relationship to the epic child hero figure; clearly, these characters are ones which relate to the child readers on some visceral level, as deep attachments to characters such as Naruto and Harry Potter are manifested in the forms of fan-fiction, fan-art, and online communities for fans to gather and communicate their devotions which often persist into adulthood. Hunt's explications and analyses of both the adult and child reader as well as of children's literature are what will, in subsequent chapters, inform my argument about the essential role of the epic child hero as a contemporary archetype as it relates to a greater cultural psyche.

Where Rose argues that children's literature is a sort of logical fallacy, and Hunt seeks to provide a blunt and clinical analysis of the relationship between reader and text, Beverly Lyon Clark explores the role of children's literature as a manifestation of historical and cultural trends. Citing *Little Lord Fauntleroy* as an example of post-war childhood and quoting Jerry Griswold, Clark explores the effect of important historical events on the development of literature.

As Jerry Griswold points out, *Fauntleroy* spoke, in the United States, to a post-Civil War need for myths of domestic harmony, myths that would legitimate American genealogy: if prevailing cultural myths before the war created an America that was a child rebelling against a father, “the new myth of national identity had to be based on the conviction that if the nation was to endure, it was necessary to reassert order and continuity rather than flounder in a state of perpetual revolution. (18)

This exact statement can be applied to emerging children’s literatures in Britain and Japan after World War II, which I will discuss in greater detail in later chapters. In the throes of global warfare, Britain lost its empire and Japan failed in its goal to achieve an empire. Both nations were devastated by the human cost of war, and in the years of reconstruction, each needed a sort of cultural re-branding which would allow them to move beyond the devastation of bombings and imagine a future where no matter what evils came against them, peace and hope would prevail. This statement also accounts for the absence of the epic child hero archetype in American children’s literature until after the events of the Vietnam War and 9/11 and its emergence thereafter. The role of this new hero is, as Clark posits, the same role once filled by the Little Lord Fauntleroy; they represent a grim determination to survive and endure, even when defenseless and lacking resources.

Epic child heroes must fit a very specific set of criteria to truly qualify for the role. They must first and foremost be children or adolescents. They must be integral to the salvation of their world not because they are a random member of a particular group,

but because they are specifically marked or chosen to do so. Their adventures must also include facing a power that outstrips them in talent and ability and overcoming it through sheer determination, usually brought on by the desire to save the lives of their friends and family. Finally, they must be willing to die, and often will die, at least symbolically, in order to achieve their goals. In subsequent chapters of this work, I will explore the evolution of the child hero in detail, from the first appearance of Tolkien's hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings* and C.S. Lewis's Pevensie siblings to the more contemporary examples found in Rowling's Harry Potter series and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. In addition to these British works, I will be examining the Japanese mangas *Naruto* by Kishimoto Masashi and *Bleach* by Kubo Tite and the American series *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card and *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. I will establish the qualifications of the epic child hero as presented in these texts and prove that it has evolved into an archetype defining the global culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

To do this, I will draw upon the critical work of Joseph Campbell and examine his definition of the classic hero and how the epic child hero both fills his definition and surpasses it to create a new archetype altogether. In addition to Campbell's work, I will be engaging with Northrop Frye's "Theories of Myths" from *Anatomy of Criticism* in order to situate the epic child hero in a postmodern mythos. Some of the theoretical issues I hope to address include Rosemary Jackson's arguments on the fantastic as vehicle for "inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* 'new', absolutely 'other' and

different” (8) in the context of contemporary children’s fantasy featuring the epic child hero who is both part of a new world and yet is an intrinsic metaphor to the order of this world as well. One of the major concerns I will be addressing is the cultural relevance of the epic child hero and its specific location in contemporary children’s fantasy. It is my hope that by exploring some of these texts and various critical voices, I can not only establish the presence of and define the nature of the epic child hero archetype, but that I can also situate the creation of this archetype in a larger cultural context by examining the historical context which made this hero necessary and by tracing the evolution of this archetype into the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER TWO: FORGE OF WAR: TOLKIEN, LEWIS,
AND THE EARLIEST EPIC CHILD HEROES

At the beginning of the twentieth century, England was a formidable world power with an imperialistic grip on nations around the world. In fact, as Niall Ferguson states, "[o]nce there was an Empire that governed roughly a quarter of the world's population, covered about the same proportion of the earth's land surface and dominated nearly all its oceans" (ix), yet, as Ferguson notes, "[w]ithin a single lifetime, that Empire . . . unravelled" (246). Ferguson disputes the idea that rebellions in the colonies were a major contributing factor to the breakdown of the British Empire (246), instead arguing that the biggest threats were from the rise of other empires (246). He states, "the Empire was dismantled not because it had oppressed subject peoples for centuries, but because it took up arms for just a few years against far more oppressive empires" (248). Entering into World War I was a further drain upon the nation's resources, and by the time the war ended, approximately one million citizens (908,371) had been lost (Cawood and McKinnon-Bell 151). Just over two decades later, England was again plunged into war, and this time sustained substantial damage both on the foreign and the domestic fronts, with approximately "383,000 combat deaths and around 67,000 civilians who died in bombing raids and similar attacks" (Catherwood). Between the cost of the two wars, there were few resources available necessary to maintain a far-flung Empire, and Great Britain's reach and rule began to decrease dramatically as it began to lose colonies and territories in Asia and Africa (Cawood and McKinnon-Bell, 146).

In the midst of the political turmoil and upheaval, however, the literary arts in Great Britain were thriving. Much of the written literature from the Modernist period explores this breakdown of society during and between the World Wars as white-collared Western men concentrated on war, politics, and floundering economies. Literature from this time is often focused on war and the crumbling social structure of a notoriously traditional empire, and thematically, it tends to be quite concrete and realistic in its examination of the ever-changing world; some notable examples of war-related literature include psychological explorations of war-induced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Elizabeth Bowen's portrait of WWII London in *The Heat of the Day* (1948), and John Braine's narrative about a battle-worn soldier's attempt to reintegrate into his life in *Room at the Top* (1957). Examples of the ever-changing social landscape during the first half of the twentieth century include the works of Irish writers such as William Butler Yeats and Sean O'Casey, who chronicled the unrest of the Irish and the eventual Irish Uprising in plays such as *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) and *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) as well as novels such as Henry Green's *Loving* (1945), which shone a spotlight on the upstairs/downstairs dynamic of an Irish manor house and the decline of that lifestyle as the wars exacted their tolls on society. Notably, much of this literature is purposefully realistic and is primarily concerned with adults and their experiences.

Not every writer, however, reacted to the rapidly changing political and social dynamics by penning realistic and philosophical fictions of the lost and bewildered upper-class trying to adjust to their new realities. J.R.R. Tolkien and other like-minded

writers such as C.S. Lewis, collectively known as “The Inklings,” turned instead to penning fantasies in which they explored the metaphysical battle of good versus evil and humankind’s role in the outcome. In a time when it seemed many authors were abandoning the Romantic and Victorian sensibilities of the previous century and taking pains to portray the realities of war and societal upheaval as honestly as possible, the Inklings’ turn to fantasy might seem out of place given the larger literary landscape. However, Rosemary Jackson argues, “[f]antasy is not to do with inventing another non-human world: it is not transcendental. It has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* ‘new’, [*sic*] absolutely ‘other’ and different” (8). By this definition, what Tolkien and Lewis were doing, then, was working through many of the same concerns about this world as other writers were, only they reworked those concerns into fantasy narratives rather than attempting to take a more realistic approach. Jackson explains that the “excursion into disorder can only begin from a base within the dominant cultural order, [so] literary fantasy is a telling index of the limits of that order. Its introduction of the ‘unreal’ is set against the category of the ‘real’—a category which the fantastic interrogates by its difference” (4). This means, then, that in order for writers to create a fantasy, they must first have a base concept of some reality from which to diverge, contrast, or question. Therefore, by examining the created world of a fantasy novel, a world such as Middle-earth or Narnia, it is possible for readers and writers to establish and question the values and limits of order in a human reality—in scientific terms, it could be said that human reality is something of a control mechanism against

which the paradigm of a fantasy world can and must be compared. During a time when the entire world was mad with war, Tolkien's and Lewis's choices not to address what was happening directly is a deliberate kind of rebellion, allowing each of them a clean slate of sorts, and each of them was able to address and interpret the war and the changing society in his own words. Additionally, as Phil Cardew states,

A great deal of the work of Lewis [and] Tolkien . . . has to do with growing up. The transition from child to adult, whether that be from schoolboy to prince or from insignificant hobbit to hero of the free world, particularly its relationship to the period of puberty and to the complex emotional forces in operation at this stage of human development, is central to the notion of the hero within these narratives. (30)

By creating fantasy realms and placing sheltered characters within them, Tolkien and Lewis are taking the idea of a clean slate even further in that they are contributing to the idea that there is a peculiar goodness associated with innocence, which will evolve into one of the key attributes of the epic child hero archetype.

Tolkien, a scholar of medieval literature, created an alternative world with its own rich history complete with mythologies and languages, and it is in this world, the world of Middle-earth, in which he sets his heroic narratives. His fictional world is peopled with a wide assortment of heroes and heroines, and his two most popular works, *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), are only two examples of the heroic narratives he set in this universe of his own making. In both texts, he weaves tales of heroism and adventure, sending his characters on impossible quests to combat an ever-growing evil

empire. Tolkien led the way into the world of fantasy with the creation of Middle-earth and the stories of its people who were also plunged into wars which threatened all of life itself and evil which transcended their entire scope of imagination. Since Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and its prequel, *The Hobbit*, were first published, scholars and fans have discussed and debated the symbolism of his story, but there is a general belief that his writing was greatly affected by both World Wars I and II, as discussed by Michael Livingston who compares Tolkien's recollections of his experiences in WWI with events that transpire in *The Lord of the Rings*, stating that "[t]hat the 'shadow of war' would leave marks in Tolkien's writing . . . is not surprising" (81). Likewise, Janet Brennan Croft explores how Tolkien's work was affected by his wartime experiences, asserting that even though "Tolkien disliked criticism that focused on details of the author's life . . . he could not entirely deny the influence of his experience on his work" (4) and arguing that "[w]hat Tolkien forged from his experiences differs greatly from the writing of 'canonical' World War I authors like Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon in both subject and tone, but he explores many of the same themes [(including the "Pastoral Moment," "Ritual and Romance," "The Sense of Natural Literature," and "Mythologizing the War")] as they do" (4).

The Hobbit is a simple adventure story: Bilbo Baggins, the eponymous hobbit, embarks on a quest to help a band of dwarves retake their lost kingdom, facing new threats and dangers along the way. He is not a child, and he does not present as a child or an epic child hero in the course of the novel; however, his story is a prequel to *The Lord of the Rings* and serves to establish the character and nature of the hobbits. *The Lord of*

the Rings trilogy revisits Bilbo's world some time later, finding it on the cusp of a war which threatens to destroy all good, living things, leaving only death, destruction, and monstrous evil races in its wake. There are many heroes to be found in the story: the fearless Aragorn, long-awaited king of men; Gandalf the Wizard, a renowned force of wisdom and knowledge; Faramir, the noble soldier; Gimli, a fierce Dwarven warrior; the Elven prince Legolas; Eowyn, the battle-maiden, and her brother, Eomer, a prince in his own right. These heroes fit the traditional standard of what a hero should be: brave, loyal, and true, able to remain strong in the face of opposition. They go willingly into battle, defying the enemy with might and valor, and they do not fear death. Despite their bravery, however, they are not the ones who ultimately pass through the flames and undo the darkest of magic. For this task, Tolkien sends the weakest, the smallest, and the most fragile of his creations: two Hobbits, Frodo Baggins and his friend Samwise Gamgee. Upon them, and particularly upon Frodo, rests the fate of their entire world, and should they fail in their task, not even the bravery of their companions will be enough to triumph over their enemy.

Tolkien's Bilbo is a more traditional sort of hero; he sets off on an adventure with a specific outcome in mind, and when it is over, he is able to return home and live out his life in peace. Bilbo fulfills the explicit requirements of the heroic quest which a hero must undertake in order to fulfill the terms of being a hero as outlined by Joseph Campbell in his study of the Hero archetype. Campbell describes the Heroic quest as having three stages, each with a series of steps that the hero might pass through before reaching his or her goal.

| Stage One: Departure | Stage Two: Trials and Victories of Initiation | Stage Three: Return and Reintegration with Society |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| “The Call to Adventure” | “The Road of Trials” | “Refusal of the Return” |
| “Refusal of the Call” | “The Meeting with the Goddess” | “The Magic Flight” |
| “Supernatural Aid” | “Woman as Temptress” | “Rescue from Without” |
| “The Crossing of the First Threshold” | “Atonement with the Father” | “The Crossing of the Return Threshold” |
| “The Belly of the Whale” | “Apotheosis” | “Master of Two Common Worlds” |
| | “The Ultimate Boon” | “Freedom to Live” |

(Figure 1: Joseph Campbell's Stages of the Hero's Journey; Campbell 28-9.)

Most quest narratives will adhere to this outline of the heroic journey, as does the story of Bilbo Baggins. Tolkien's second hero, Bilbo's heir, Frodo, also undertakes the heroic quest, only with a slight twist to the end. Whereas Bilbo certainly experienced personal growth during his adventure, he is never essentially changed as a result of them. He returned to his beloved Shire with new-found confidence and the lust for adventuring, but once home, he is also generally content to remain there, bedeviling his friends and neighbors, writing the story of his adventures, and enjoying the occasional visit from Gandalf. As the first iteration of the epic child hero, however, Frodo is never able to truly “return” from his adventures. What he endures in his travels transforms him psychologically, making him unable to fully reintegrate within society; thus, in the final stage of the quest, he does not truly experience the “freedom to live” (Figure 1). The remaining members of Frodo's fellowship, however, are all able to lead full lives after the quest is completed, for, unlike the traditional hero, an epic child hero sacrifices his or her innocence, and some part of his or her own soul is thrown into the void when the enemy

is defeated. Those that live on do so only on borrowed time, each knowing the price that was paid for their success, which, in Frodo's case, was his peace of mind. As each of the true epic child heroes only achieve victory after enduring a tangible loss, in the outline of the journey of the epic child hero, the final phase would not be the "Freedom to Live" so much as it would be "Life after Death."

In choosing Bilbo and Frodo as his heroes, Tolkien introduced a new concept to the heroic fantasy narrative. The Hobbits do not fit the traditional hero mold. Tolkien describes them as being "an unobtrusive but very ancient people . . . they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt" (*Fellowship* 1). These are not a race of warriors, but of somewhat isolationist farmers who value routine and order over heroics and adventure. Of their physical attributes, Tolkien explains that Hobbits "are quick of hearing and sharp-eyed, and though they are inclined to be fat and do not hurry unnecessarily, they are nonetheless nimble and deft in their movements" (*Fellowship* 1), and it is their deftness that allows them to elude members of other races at will (*Fellowship* 1). Tolkien also explains that "they are a little people . . . [t]heir height is variable, ranging between two and four feet . . . [t]hey seldom now reach three feet" (*Fellowship* 1). Their physical attributes also include large, hairy feet with tough soles so that they had no need of shoes and jolly, happy faces suited for food and fellowship (*Fellowship* 2). In his description of their culture, Tolkien explains that Hobbits are jovial and closely related to humans:

[L]augh they did, and eat, and drink, often and heartily, being fond of simple jests at all times, and of six meals a day (when they could get them). They were

hospitable and delighted in parties, and in presents, which they gave away freely and eagerly accepted.

It is plain indeed that in spite of later estrangement Hobbits are relatives of ours: far nearer to us than Elves, or even than Dwarves. Of old they spoke the languages of Men, after their own fashion, and liked and disliked much the same things as Men did. (*Fellowship 2*)

Finally, Tolkien explains the life cycle of the Hobbits, stressing that they do not come of age until they reach the age of thirty-three and that even the most long-lived Hobbit of recent memory lived until the age of 130 (*Fellowship 22*). Tolkien further elaborates upon the culture and society of the Hobbits at leisure, discussing their festivals and holidays as well as their fashion and their love of pipeweed, leaving readers with the understanding that this race is productive and good-natured, even if somewhat insular and simple as well.

The four Hobbits (Frodo, Sam, and their companions Merry and Pippin), when compared to the other heroes in the stories, are obviously much more child-like in many ways. They are primarily concerned with physical comforts such as food and nice beds and do not particularly enjoy traveling, and they require the protection provided by the larger members of their fellowship and are often treated as children would be treated. For example, Pippin, the one Hobbit who is still considered a true adolescent, is particularly rambunctious, his mischievous behavior often resulting in lectures from Gandalf and other members of the Fellowship or, in some cases, disasters; for instance, his impulsive tossing of a stone into a well alerted a party of orcs to their presence in Moria and awoke

and unleashed the deadly Balrog. Because they are from a sheltered race, these four Hobbits also have limited knowledge of history and world events, knowing only what they have gleaned from legend and folklore, and in this lack of knowledge and experience, they are also like children.

In Frodo, Tolkien actually creates the prototype of the Epic child hero, but it is clear that Tolkien's invention of this archetype was not intentional, for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy was originally only intended to be a sequel of sorts to *The Hobbit*: "It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937 . . . [I was] encouraged by the requests from readers for more information concerning hobbits and their adventures" ("Foreword" xiii). As he expressed in the "Foreword to the Second Edition of *The Lord of the Rings*," published in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien was more interested in developing the greater world and history of Middle-earth than in writing *The Lord of the Rings* (xiii). When he resumed the project, the world of Middle-earth had been so thoroughly developed that Tolkien simply required a new Hobbit to fill Bilbo's shoes in the sequel. Thus, he created Frodo, allowing Bilbo's story to continue via a younger version of himself who could reasonably embark on fresh adventures. However, Frodo's quest was far greater than his cousin's; where Bilbo was sent to aid in the restoration of a kingdom and the slaying of a dragon, Frodo was sent to unravel the very knot of evil itself. Bilbo's task was a typical heroic quest, and though his actions were certainly heroic and brave, and even resulted in the actual death of the dragon, it was not his destiny that made him a hero, but rather his clever wits (even though it was his destiny to acquire the One Ring during his journey). On the other hand, Frodo's

heroism was not aided by his wits or skill; his heroics lay instead in his innate goodness and child-like innocence, neither of which are the traditional tools of heroism.

Tolkien's *Hobbits* are an unusual choice for epic heroes, and Frodo himself is an even more unlikely candidate. According to Campbell, the traditional hero was a character like the ranger Aragorn, a born leader who rises from obscurity to assume his destiny (280). Campbell's description of a hero is specific: "The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained" (29). This description certainly describes Aragorn rather than Frodo, as Aragorn was the long-awaited and promised king of men whose family had been in hiding for centuries. He emerges from hiding when Frodo begins his quest to become guide and guard, and he is unrecognizable by his first appearance:

Suddenly Frodo noticed that a strange-looking weather-beaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall, was also listening intently to the hobbit-talk. He had a tall tankard in front of him, and was smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved. His legs were stretched out before him, showing high boots of supple leather that fitted him well, but had seen much wear and were now caked with mud. A travel-stained cloak of heavy dark-green cloth was drawn close about him, and in spite of the heat of the room he wore a hood that overshadowed his face[.] (*Fellowship* 153)

In his final description, after Frodo has delivered the ring to its doom and Aragorn has successfully defeated the armies of their enemies, he is no longer described as a man of no consequence, but is instead revealed as a king to all:

But when Aragorn arose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. (*Return of the King* 947)

From shadows to light, from Strider to Aragorn, he has certainly followed the hero's path. Frodo, on the other hand, as the earliest prototype of a different kind of hero, is described quite differently. The earliest comment made directly of him, by Gaffer, is a simple one: "Mr. Frodo is as nice a young hobbit as you could wish to meet" (*Fellowship* 22). Amongst the hobbits, Frodo was rather well known because of his family connections, and enjoyed a certain status in the community, so while hobbits in general were not a well-known race, he was certainly not hidden in obscurity. However, at the end of Frodo's story, Sam notes that

Frodo dropped quietly out of all the doings of the Shire, and Sam was pained to notice how little honour he had in his own country. Few people knew or wanted to know about his deeds and adventures; their admiration and respect were given mostly to Mr. Meriadoc and Mr. Peregrin and (if Sam had known it) to himself. (*Return* 1002)

Unlike the kingly Aragorn, Frodo's part of the quest is finished once the One Ring is destroyed, and he, despite being the greatest hero of all, before whom even one such as Aragorn himself bowed low, and whose failure would have doomed the entire world of Middle-earth, enters into obscurity even amongst the people with whom he once held an

honorable status. This reversal of the paradigm is one of the distinguishing features between traditional, adult heroes and the new epic child heroes. The traditional heroic journey is but a beginning, and the journey will be an introduction of sorts to the hero's new life which will come after the quest is completed, whereas for an epic child hero, the quest signifies the completion of sorts, as his or her destiny is fulfilled and he or she is no longer required to be a hero.

As defined, the epic child hero is an orphan with a surrogate familial relationship, adult mentors, and a closely-knit group of peers, and above all, he or she is the only person capable of completing an impossible task as part of an epic quest against evil. Frodo, though an adult Hobbit, exhibits these qualifications with the one exception being that he is not an actual child, even though he is inexperienced and in many ways, completely innocent, as are children. He otherwise fits the required parameters of the epic child hero in that he is an orphan raised by extended family (Bilbo) and later comes to be protected by an older, wiser mentor. This mentor, Gandalf, knows that Frodo is special and must fulfill the specific and dangerous duty of carrying the One Ring into Mordor. Frodo is accompanied by a loyal group of peers and friends—Sam, Pippin, and Merry—who function as a surrogate family for him in the absence of Bilbo; and he is surrounded by a guard of well-equipped warriors—Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and Boromir, who will protect him at any cost—even though by right, some of them are better equipped and more suitable for the role of hero than he. Throughout the course of the trilogy, Frodo encounters many of the renowned citizens of his world, including the immortal Tom Bombadil, the Elven king Elrond, and the ancient Elven Queen and sorceress, Galadriel.

Each one of these characters (all of whom have proven to be paragons of goodness and virtue in Middle-earth) understands and insists that Frodo and Frodo alone must carry the One Ring. He is set apart from his peers even as he stands among them, one marked by destiny for an impossible purpose, for among the seasoned, noble warriors and innocent, pure-hearted companions surrounding him, he alone can face the temptations of the ring and withstand them long enough to deliver it to its doom.

Thus, in creating Frodo, Tolkien introduced a new archetype into common literature. Unlike the child protagonists of the past who were simply allowed to enjoy fantastical adventures that provoked imagination and wonder, Frodo was thrust into the flames of war and carried with him the fate of his world. His adventure did not leave him with beautiful memories of far-away Wonderlands and Neverlands and Oz; he was instead left with images of the Dead Marshes and Mordor, of death and destruction, and with the shadows that bearing the ring left upon his very soul. It is in Frodo that Tolkien captures the devastation that war wreaks upon young, untried soldiers: after his task is completed, Frodo is left forever changed by what he has seen and done. It is upon this point that the true purpose of an epic child hero is revealed. These children represent the hopes of their people and the belief that victory is possible. Their innocence, not their abilities, sets them apart from other warriors, and that innocence becomes the battle-standard for the more seasoned soldiers. This innocence is what they fight for, even as it is sacrificed to the cause. This is why the tasks of Epic child heroes must be completed by the time they reach adulthood, for once the task is complete, they can no longer be called children. They vanquished the foe and know the difference between good and evil; their

innocence is gone, and they have simply become adults who must rely on skills, training, and necessary tools for battle.

C.S. Lewis, like Tolkien, also created a gripping fantasy series which relied heavily on the themes of war. In addition, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is also something of a religious series, as it draws heavily on the use of religious imagery. Unlike Tolkien's series, however, Lewis's *Narnia* books deal directly with children, specifically and primarily the four Pevensie siblings, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, who are the first actual children cast in the role of the epic child hero, which they share in the novel *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), which includes an allegorical retelling of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. As fitting, the most heroic and the truest believer of them all is Lucy, the youngest. Throughout the course of the series, they do not always function in the role of the epic child hero, but in their first adventure, they do qualify.

As *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* opens, the Pevensie siblings are isolated from parental influence: it is wartime and they have been shipped to a country home to protect them from the bombings in London during WWII. Farah Mendlesohn calls this novel "the classic portal fantasy," which she explains is "simply a fantastic world entered through a portal" (xix). In Mendlesohn's portal-quest fantasy, "the protagonist goes from a mundane life—in which the fantastic, if she is aware of it, is very distant and unknown (or at least unavailable to the protagonist)—into direct contact with the fantastic, through which she transitions, to the point of negotiation with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm" (xx). The Pevensie siblings experience this portal quest together when they discover the hidden world of Narnia.

When the siblings arrive in the country, they are watched over by a mysterious and friendly professor, who, unbeknownst to them, helps in facilitating their access to Narnia by encouraging Peter and Susan to believe Lucy's account of traveling through the wardrobe. Once they are inside Narnia, they face an impossible evil which they cannot fight, and they are aided by all manner of creatures in their quest to find Aslan. They learn that their presence is not only welcomed but that it has also been long awaited, as it signifies the imminent return of Aslan and the impending defeat of Jadis, the White Witch: "down at Cair Paravel there are four thrones and it's a saying in Narnia time out of mind that when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit in those four thrones, then it will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign but of her life" (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* 82).

The epic child hero is ultimately a messiah figure; unlike later epic child heroes, however, the Pevensies are not intended to be the sacrifices for a cause. The Narnia series, being based in Christian theology, instead casts the children in the roles of the human followers of the messiah of the Judeo-Christian *Bible* (even having the citizens of Narnia referring to them as "Sons of Adam" and "Daughters of Eve") as opposed to casting them in the role of the messiah, which is the role into which other epic child heroes are cast. However, Edmund plays the role of Adam, and it is his betrayal of Aslan that requires the penalty of death, as does Adam's betrayal of God in the Garden of Eden. This betrayal prompts Aslan, in the role of the messiah, to sacrifice himself in Edmund's stead, which causes him to be reborn with the power to vanquish Jadis. It is notable, however, that Edmund does sacrifice his childhood innocence when he betrays Aslan, but

he also undergoes a remarkable personality change when Aslan forgives him and, once he pays the price for his crimes, he transforms from a sullen, jealous boy into a thoughtful, wise young man. Lucy and Susan, who bear witness to the sacrificial death of Aslan, also suffer a loss of innocence as they watched him die in place of their brother. Lewis details their grief in an aside to the reader:

I hope no one who reads this book has been quite as miserable as Susan and Lucy were that night; but if you have been—if you've been up all night and cried till you have no more tears left in you—you will know that here comes in the end a sort of quietness. You feel as if nothing was ever going to happen again. (*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* 158)

However, their sadness is swept away when Aslan is resurrected, and their grief does not linger in their hearts or cause them to undergo any particular sort of change in character as Edmund's grief causes him to do. As the Narnia series progresses, the children do not continue to fulfill the roles of epic child heroes and instead continue to have merely fantastic adventures, but their earliest appearance is perhaps their most famous, and it is the one which builds upon the epic child hero template created by Tolkien.

The Pevensie siblings, like Frodo, begin their journey as innocents who are faced with trials and tasks that they are not personally equipped to undertake, and yet they choose to do what they can to assist Aslan and the citizens of Narnia. When they enter Narnia, it is as ordinary children, and once they fulfill the prophecy, they live as kings and queens in Narnia for many years. When their task is completed and Narnia is peaceful and stable, they are drawn back to the wardrobe (which they have long since

forgotten) and suddenly find themselves children again, their purpose in Narnia served and their presence no longer necessary. Once they have served as heroes and rulers in Narnia, they are no longer like their earthly peers, and yet they must resume their roles as ordinary children, albeit those who will always be one step out of sync with the world around them, never knowing if they will return to their beloved Narnia again. They, like Frodo, are forever changed, both gifted and burdened with the knowledge of a life outside of their own world.

Some of the most fundamental traits of the epic child hero archetype are established in these characters created by Tolkien and Lewis. As evidenced by these early narrative examples, one of the defining traits of the epic child hero is that he or she is only person who is capable of defeating an enemy who is much more powerful than the epic child hero could ever be, and the only way victory is possible is for certain requirements be met. It is not enough for epic child heroes to be good and brave and strong. If they do not fulfill specific requirements, then they are not epic child heroes. First, they must actually be children, or as in Tolkien's example, innocents, and they must complete their task while still children, or innocents. Frodo succumbs to the power of the ring, though only at the very brink of the fires in which it must be destroyed, allowing his task to be completed despite his failure. The Pevensies enter Narnia as children, and when they have completed their task, are sent back to their own world to live, barred from their adopted land until it has use for them once more.

Once the character of the epic child hero is established, a few other requirements must be met. First, the epic child hero must be set apart from his or her peers in several

ways. Frodo is a hobbit, which is considered a rather mysterious race by others in Middle-earth, as hobbits tend to keep to themselves. He is also an orphan, and a Baggins, and for some mysterious reason, the Baggins exhibit some sort of immunity to the effects of the One Ring. The Pevensie children are not orphans, but they are separated from their parents during a time of war. Once they enter Narnia, they are the only humans among races of sentient animals and mythological creatures. The epic child hero is also one who must fulfill a prophecy in some way. Unlike the prophecy of the Sons of Adam and the Daughters of Eve in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, there is no specific prophecy about who must destroy the One Ring (though there are specific prophecies about the Ring). However, when it is decided that the ring must be destroyed, Frodo knows that the task must be his: “A great dread fell on him, as if he was awaiting the pronouncement of some doom that he had long foreseen and vainly hoped might after all never be spoken” (*Fellowship* 263). His feeling is confirmed by Elrond, who states “If I understand aright all that I have heard . . . I think that this task is appointed for you, Frodo; and that if you do not find a way, no one will” (*Fellowship* 264). The third trait of the epic child hero is that he or she or they will be aided by a closely-knit group of peers: Pippin, Merry, and Sam are Frodo’s friends and protectors, and the Pevensie children are able to rely on one another, with the brief exception of Edmund, who ultimately stands with his siblings.

The epic child hero must also be guided by an experienced mentor, though the mentor is, first and foremost, loyal to the cause at hand rather than to the epic child hero, despite personal affections. Gandalf and Aslan fulfill these roles, and they remain perhaps the greatest examples of these mentors. Later examples of these guides, such as Albus

Dumbledore of the Harry Potter series and Colonel Graff of the Ender series, tend to be far more committed to their agendas than to their heroes, even though they genuinely care for the children they are grooming to send into battle. The epic child hero is surrounded by capable “adults” who are perhaps much better suited for battle than they are themselves, but who, for various reasons, are not able to fulfill the one task necessary for victory. Frodo travels with the greatest warriors and wizard of his world, and yet none of them are capable of bearing the ring because they are all too susceptible to its corrupting influence to do so. The Pevensie children find themselves in a battle against the White Witch with all manner of creatures, yet only their presence will assure her defeat. Finally, the epic child hero is compelled to do what is right to defeat an adversary (who should, by all rights, be able to defeat the epic child heroes with no difficulty) with little or no regard for what it will cost them personally. When Frodo volunteers to undertake the task of transporting the vile ring into the very heart of a dark and forbidding land, he is filled not only with dread but also with “[a]n overwhelming longing to rest and remain at peace by Bilbo’s side in Rivendell” (*Fellowship* 263). However, despite this longing, once he is set upon his path, nothing will dissuade him from fulfilling his duty until the very end, when at last his mind is no longer able to resist the ring, though it is only the power of the ring being in close proximity to its master that caused him to falter and not his own will or cowardice. The Pevensie children sacrifice their lives in the human world in order to help Aslan and the citizens of Narnia defeat Jadis, the White Witch, never giving any thought to what they are forsaking, and never realizing that their extended stay in Narnia would come to so abrupt an end, thus leaving them to live as aliens in their own world.

These earliest examples of the epic child hero are, in many ways, representative of British society during World War II. In Tolkien's novels, the hobbits are a peaceable agrarian people, content to stay at home and remain uninvolved with the problems of the world around them. The race of men, on the other hand, is filled with heroes and champions, men of great renown and political prowess. It is not uncommon for them to adventure and explore. When Frodo and his friends set out on their journey, however, they are embarking upon a path few hobbits ever dared tread. This is a mirror of Britain's involvement in the world wars in which young men who had never entertained thoughts of being soldiers were called upon to leave home and fight regardless of former vocation, status, or suitability for the job. Lewis's Pevensie children are also called to war in a land far from their home—a place where they are treated as adults despite their youth and are venerated for their very presence, for without it, the war effort would certainly fail. The fact that the hobbits and the Pevensies become heroes despite their lack of qualifications and their innocence is significant as it demonstrates the authors' hopes for the future of their own people. Because each appearance of an epic child hero in literature can be directly related to a specific act of war (including WWII, the Vietnam war, and 9/11), it appears that in many ways, epic child heroes are created solely to speak to their authors' experience with war and to address the fears and concerns of those authors as well as of society in general. Tolkien is the first to confront the reality of war and its effects upon the common people, and Lewis continues down his same path. Together, they open the door for other authors to address not only the violence of war but also the mythologies and moralities surrounding it. After the hobbits and the Pevensies, each epic child hero

will, in turn, confront what it is to be a normal person caught up in extraordinary events, and in doing so, will become a voice not only of their author, but of their readers as well.

CHAPTER THREE: FIFTY YEARS LATER:
BRITAIN'S EPIC CHILD HEROES ARE BORN

Fifty years after World War II, the world had once again settled into a new reality: The age of empirical conquest was over, and even the once solid Eastern Bloc had crumbled. Boundaries were being redrawn in Africa and parts of Asia, but, as Erich Maria Remarque noted, "All [was] quiet on the Western front" (1). The children of the WWII generation had long ago come of age, and their grandchildren were reaching adulthood themselves. Capitalism was flourishing throughout the West, and though the world continued to both progress and shrink, the shadow of the second world war lingered in Great Britain, where it was a matter of national pride that the citizenry had held out so staunchly against Adolf Hitler and his relentless assault upon their country. Direct references to Winston Churchill and other political figures, the war itself, and its impact on domestic affairs can be found in much of the British literature (both textual and visual) of the latter half of the twentieth century, and even in instances where the war is not featured, it looms over the landscape of the narrative, casting a shadow even in its absence.¹

After the monumental cultural and economic upheaval brought about by the world wars in the first half of the twentieth century and the technological advancements which ushered in a new age of scientific interest, it is no wonder that many began questioning the traditional power structures and social hierarchies of the past. This skepticism has led

¹ Popular television programs such as *Foyle's War* and *Land Girls* are set during WWII, while other popular television programs such as the long-running *Doctor Who* and its companion program, *Torchwood*, make frequent references to WWII. There are also many popular British films and novels of the same nature.

to a certain cynicism regarding government institutions, and that, along with the general inability to keep the inner workings of those institutions secret from the public, has resulted in the public's growing distrust of those institutions and for one another (van der Meer par. 5-6). According to Katrin Berndt and Lena Steveker, "In the course of the 20th century, we have become suspicious of the idea of heroism. Looking back on decades that taught us like none before how easily humans fall prey to corruption, avarice, and evil, we have indeed grown . . . distrustful of heroes" (1). However, at the same time, Mary F. Pharr argues that "[h]umanity has always had a boundless interest in heroes, in those few among us who rise to perform great but arduous deeds" (53). In a world that is both weary of heroes but also yearning for them, what is to be done? Margot Hillel observes that "[c]hildren's literature has played its part both in establishing and reflecting society's views of the hero" (74), and appropriately, a rebirth of the hero in the post-war world happens in children's literature.

The epic child hero, then, serves a population that is looking to the future after experiencing the shattering disillusionment brought on by two world wars and decades of recovery, reflecting society's need for a hero as well as its cynicism and distrust of the hero as well. Maria Nikolajeva argues, "as adults we want the child to grow up and become one of us, the powerful. At the same time, we want to keep the child innocent and ignorant, since we then have power over him" (236). A child hero, and in particular an epic child hero, has the benefit of youth, innocence, and, for those ascribing to more Romantic ideals, a certain moral superiority, but most importantly, the epic child hero is

still a child, and ultimately, when his or her purpose has been served, he or she can return to a mundane life as adults resume their own roles as authority figures once more.

As the twentieth century began winding down and a new millennium drew closer, two British writers, Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling, each debuted a new children's fantasy series. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, inspired by Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Parsons and Nicholson 126), is, in some ways, the anti-Narnia, a religious fantasy quest devoid of religion. The inversion of Lewis's narrative was Pullman's intention, as stated in an interview with Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholson:

"It's in contrast to C.S. Lewis's idea, for example, the Christian idea, that the Fall is a terrible thing; that we are all children of sin, and there's no hope of doing any good unless we believe in God and then only if he chooses to bless us with his grace. I think that's a pessimistic and defeatist view, and I don't like it at all. . . .

This is the theme of the book, my trilogy. (119)

Rowling's Harry Potter series, also a quest narrative, is thematically more similar to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* story, which pits the forces of good against the forces of evil with vaguer religious underpinnings than those found in Lewis's and Pullman's stories.

Unlike *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which serves as a sophisticated Christian allegory and fantasy, *His Dark Materials* explores the concepts of religion and intellectualism being at odds with one another, retelling the Biblical account of Adam and Eve from a secular perspective. In the series, humanism defeats religion instead of the other way around, reflecting the postmodern decline of the Judeo-Christian belief system in contemporary Western culture. As noted by Naomi Wood, "Pullman's narrator does

not tell us what to think about moral decision making—at least not in the direct and regulated manner of Lewis's narrator" (244). What this means for Pullman's heroine, Lyra, then, is that her heroism is somewhat problematic; the choices she must make are more ambiguous than absolute, with outcomes that are not always overtly right or wrong according to any particular ethical standard. In some cases, even when she makes the only "right" choice (saving Roger), negative consequences follow (Lord Asriel subsequently sacrificing him), adding even more complexity to Lyra's heroism. Furthermore, according to Clare Walsh, "[Unlike Lewis,] Pullman is almost always provocative and subversive, challenging our very understanding of what literature for children/young adults can, or should, be" (248), and "he writes *against* the tendency amongst children's authors, especially but not exclusively amongst writers of traditional children's fantasy, to deny young protagonists the right to move beyond the safe but circumscribed world of childhood innocence" (241). Pullman himself takes great umbrage at Lewis's treatment of his child heroes in particular, stating that,

To solve a narrative problem by killing one of your characters is something many authors have done at one time or another. To slaughter the lot of them, and then claim they're better off, is not honest storytelling: it's propaganda in the service of a life-hating ideology. But that's par for the course. Death is better than life; boys are better than girls; light-coloured people are better than dark-coloured people; and so on. There is no shortage of such nauseating drivel in Narnia, if you can face it. (Pullman, "Portrait" par. 9)

Pullman endeavors, then, to create a world where the right choices are not always as clear as they are in Lewis's Narnia, and in doing so, challenges Lewis with an almost gleeful fervor before arriving at a conclusion that sees him offering a sort of narrative vindication to Susan Pevensie via Lyra's final heroic actions.

Lyra is paired with a hero, Will, who technically shares the status of protagonist, but who is also never quite as significant as she within the overarching narrative. This story belongs to Lyra, the second Eve, who must unravel the knot at the heart of the mystery and correct the wrongs which have led to the undoing of her world and all of the parallel worlds in the His Dark Materials universe, and in a role-reversal, Will, her Adam, is there as her helpmeet as opposed to her serving as his. In the His Dark Materials series, Lyra, like Lucy and her siblings in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, is fated to reveal the truth. However, while the Pevensies are called to defeat the enemies of the decidedly Christian Aslan and strengthen the supernatural world of Narnia, Lyra is meant to demolish the beliefs of the Magisterium (an entity modeled on the Catholic or Anglican church) and, ultimately, of every other worldly religion that places its faith in supernatural gods. Lyra is, therefore, the first modern incarnation of the epic child hero as originally modeled by Frodo Baggins and his fellow hobbits and subsequently by Lucy Pevensie and her siblings, who will be discussed later in this chapter.

J.K. Rowling's first novel in the Harry Potter series is *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, whose June 1997 publication closely follows the publication of *Northern Lights*, the first novel in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials series, which was published in July of 1995. *The Philosopher's Stone* begins the story of a young boy,

Harry Potter, who is unknowingly growing up in the shadow of the First Wizarding War waged by the villain Lord Voldemort, who had himself grown up in the shadow of another global wizarding war against the dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald and his supporters in the 1940s. The first global wizarding war ended in 1945, when Albus Dumbledore defeated Grindelwald, and Grindelwald was subsequently sent to Nurmengard, a prison of his own design, where he remained until his death at the hands of Lord Voldemort fifty years later.² Thus, the original global wizarding war directly parallels WWII, with the charismatic, ambitious, and most likely Germanic³ Grindelwald representing the historical Hitler; and the quiet, unassuming, more introverted and less charismatic Albus Dumbledore representing Great Britain, the ultimate champion. According to J.K. Rowling, the First Wizarding War and Harry's war, ostensibly the Second Wizarding War, can be seen to parallel the two great World Wars set a generation apart in the early twentieth century, and, as in the World Wars, the children of the parents who fought in the First Wizarding War are the soldiers in the Second Wizarding War. Rowling states in an interview with Melissa Anelli and Emerson Spartz: "It amuses me to make allusions to things that were happening in the Muggle world, so my feeling would be that while there's a global Muggle war going on, there's also a global wizarding war going on," confirming that the connections between fiction and reality observed by readers are indeed intentional.

² The information about the wizarding wars is back-story, and though pieces of it are shared throughout the series, though much of it is not revealed until the final novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

³ Grindelwald was a charming but dark wizard who once sought power and to subjugate Muggles and other magical and non-magical races. He was educated at the magical academy of Durmstrang, located in Scandinavia, and he was known for experimenting on living beings. His personality and resume therefore much resemble Hitler's; he and Dumbledore had once been friends and allies, but Dumbledore eventually brought him to justice. (Rowling)

Lord Voldemort, who, like Grindelwald, possesses similarities to Hitler, is also obsessed with the idea of creating a pure race though he himself is of mixed magical and non-magical bloodlines. Voldemort's desire to scourge the "mudbloods" (wizards born into non-magic, or "muggle" families) from the wizarding world and to rule over both the magical and non-magical races and bend them to his will is also reminiscent of Hitler's goal to purge the earth of the people he found to be undesirable and to place all of the West under German rule. In her close comparison of Voldemort and Hitler, Aurélie Lacassagne observes that "[w]hen Voldemort takes over the Ministry, he establishes a totalitarian regime and institutes racial laws. Some civil servants like Umbridge remain and collaborate, sometimes zealously, with this new regime. It is difficult to miss the analogy with Nazism" (328). By connecting the villain of the series so strongly to an actual historical villain, Rowling is remarking upon the strong lingering influence of Hitler and World War II in addition to informing readers that Voldemort is a formidable opponent. Thus, when Harry Potter, a boy of seemingly no consequence, is destined to bring down Voldemort and his regime despite overwhelming odds, readers can easily understand the magnitude of his task. He is, like Lyra, an early contemporary incarnation of the epic child hero who represents the best of his kind, one who is willing to stand firm in the face of overwhelming evil. However, in Lyra's world, the knowledge of the growing evil in the multiverse is limited to very few people; the general populations of the various worlds she travels between remain oblivious to the true nature of the dangers facing them, while in Harry's world, the entire wizarding community is conscious of Voldemort and his threat, and every member of that community must choose whom to

support—Harry and Dumbledore, or Lord Voldemort and his Death Eaters, but no one in the Wizarding War is exempt from making that decision as Voldemort's power becomes more firmly established in the *Deathly Hallows*. Again, this is reminiscent of WWII and how political neutrality became increasingly difficult as both Germany and Japan grew more aggressive in their mutual quests for power and drew more nations of the world into the fray.

In Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the secret entrance to the magical realm of Narnia is hidden in an old wardrobe and is discovered by Lucy Pevensie during a game of hide-and-seek. Lyra's journey, like Lucy Pevensie's, begins when she too chooses a wardrobe as a hiding place, and her first act of heroism is to reveal herself to the man she believes to be her uncle, Lord Asriel, to save him from being poisoned. It is while she is in the wardrobe that she also passes into a new world, one of knowledge, if not understanding, just as Lucy passed from her own world into Narnia, and she is allowed to undergo this journey because of her choice to save Asriel's life. When she exits the wardrobe after hearing Asriel's lecture to the Masters on the nature of what Asriel mysteriously refers to as "Dust," Lyra has been forever changed and armed with the first bit of information about Dust that she will need for her heroic journey.

By comparison, Harry spends most of his childhood inside the cupboard beneath the stairs, a small room similar to a wardrobe in function. It is only when he finally *leaves* the cupboard to attend Hogwarts that his journey is set into motion. His first overt act of heroism is when he refuses the friendship of Draco Malfoy in favor of that of Ron Weasley, despite the fact that Draco is obviously quite wealthy and represents the type of

person the Dursleys would most likely wish him to befriend, while Ron is neither of those things. Harry also asks the Hogwarts' Sorting Hat not to sort him into the Slytherin House despite being promised greatness, cementing his future as a member of Gryffindor House and his friendship with Ron, which are both critical to his success as a hero later on in the series. Thus, these wardrobe doors, echoing back to the doors of Lucy's wardrobe, represent the first steps of Lyra's and Harry's heroic journeys, and, as in the case of Lucy Pevensie, their entrance into new realms altogether.

Before their respective stories begin, neither Lyra nor Harry was the type of child whom one might presume could become a hero, but they are the first fully realized examples of the epic child hero archetype for the post-World War II era, and their stories are what finally codify the criteria first introduced by Tolkien and Lewis into standards for subsequent epic child heroes. It is these criteria that establish the difference between the classic hero archetype and the epic child hero archetype. Additionally, these criteria serve to transform ordinary child protagonists into epic child heroes.

In keeping with the simple backgrounds of the Hobbits and the Pevensies, both Lyra and Harry are of humble origin. They, like all epic child heroes, do not have a relationship with their parents. Lyra lives as an orphan on the grounds of Oxford College, running wild with the children of the staff and the town, instigating all manner of mischief and tomfoolery while Harry, an actual orphan, lives as quietly as possible, seeking only to avoid the notice of his abusive relatives and guardians, the Dursleys. They are each estranged from true parental influence and authority, though each later finds powerful, capable adult mentors who serve to aid them in their quests, and they also

have very close friends who help them complete their tasks. They both also face enemies who are much more powerful and experienced than they are, and the adults in their worlds expect them to not only go to battle against these enemies but also to defeat them. Finally, they are the only ones who are capable of completing their quests, despite not being the most powerful or the most qualified. In fact, Lyra and Harry are both children of prophecies, though Harry's destiny was appointed to him by his nemesis as opposed to being fated to him by a nebulous supernatural force or entity.

Quite a bit of the criticism regarding *His Dark Materials* focuses on the theological concerns of the narrative and Lyra's role as the second Eve,⁴ but there has not been much critical dialogue regarding her role as an archetypal hero, and thus the significance of her heroic role (specifically as the first fully-formed epic child hero, having predated Harry Potter by about two years) has gone unnoted. Tammy Halsdorf observes that Lyra's "Eve subversively functions as a female savior figure" (172), and Clare Walsh comments that "Lyra is an active in-the-world heroine, thereby challenging the assumption that female quest narratives should be fundamentally different in kind from the traditional male quest" (241), suggesting that the most remarkable thing about Lyra's heroism is her gender. However, even though it is noteworthy in the context of her identity as an archetypal hero, her gender is only secondary to her age. Lyra's young age allows Pullman to impose the narrative requirement that she must be ignorant of her true role in her own quest since it will only be complete once she has crossed the invisible line

⁴ In addition to the works which address certain theological issues in *His Dark Materials* by Clare Walsh, Naomi Wood, and Kristine Moruzi that are cited in this text, some other examples of theological criticisms of Lyra include Mary Harris Russell's "'Eve, Again! Mother Eve!': Pullman's Eve Variations"; and Ludmilla Miteva-Roussanova's "Dreaming of Eve: Milton versus Pullman."

between innocence and experience by discovering romantic love. As Naomi Wood points out, "In a book premised on the importance of knowledge, she must do her part ignorantly" (251); it is, then, her childish virtue that is the most compelling aspect of her heroism as opposed to her gender.

Lyra's journey is easily that of Campbell's archetypal hero. She experiences each step of the Hero's Journey as previously outlined in Chapter Two (see Figure 1). In Stage One, the "Departure," she receives a "call to adventure" in two parts: the first is when she overhears Lord Asriel tell the Masters about the Dust and the second is when her friend Roger vanishes, and she sets upon the path to find him. She is tempted to "refuse the call" by Mrs. Coulter, her mother, who offers her a life of luxury and education, but Lyra refuses and escapes. Along the way, she is given aid by humans and is "supernaturally aided" by an anthropomorphic bear named Iorek Byrnison and by the Witches, who recognize her as their long-awaited child of prophecy. After "crossing the threshold" and beginning her quest, Lyra's first true challenge comes when she tracks Roger to Bolvanger, a fortress where the Magesterium is conducting experiments on children and their daemons as they try to understand the nature of Dust, which they have worked out is the manifestation of that intangible concept of maturity which settles over those who have crossed over from Innocence to Experience but do not yet understand what causes the actual "crossing over" event and believe it to be related to daemons. Lyra is imprisoned with the other children at Bolvanger and must escape after successfully rescuing Roger. The pair then make their way to Asriel, the man Lyra now knows to be her father, where she soon finds herself in the "belly of the whale," the point in the story

where she must either change, die, or turn back. Heretofore, Lyra has believed her father represents safety, but after their arrival, Asriel sacrifices Roger to open the way for him to travel into a parallel world and then leaves a grieving Lyra with her dead companion. At this point of her quest, Lyra is, for the first time, completely alone and without a concrete idea of what she must do next. She understands and accepts that she cannot return to the life she once knew, and thus she sets forth willingly on the greater quest to solve the mystery of the Dust before her. She has been betrayed, swallowed up by the "whale," and separated from her support system, and more importantly, she believes that she has failed in her quest, which in her mind was to save Roger from his abductors. When she follows her father into the Dust, she emerges from the "belly" with a newfound awareness of herself and passes into the next phase of her quest and sets forth on the "road of trials."

Campbell's second stage, the "Trials and Victories of Initiation" (See Figure 1), spans the entire second novel in the series, *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and a significant portion of the third novel in the trilogy, *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). It begins when Lyra enters into the "crossroads realm" of Cittàgazze via the rift her father created, where she meets Will, a boy from another world entirely. Will joins Lyra in her quest as they undertake a number of increasingly difficult challenges, or Campbell's "trials." These trials of initiation serve several purposes. First, by undergoing the trials together, Lyra and Will create a bond with one another. Secondly, the trials serve to show Lyra the truth of her quest and what is at stake if she fails. The adults in her world who have been studying the Dust have various personal agendas: knowledge, power, wealth—all of them

desire a selfish outcome. None of them are trying to understand what is actually happening with the Dust, but Lyra is determined to understand it and to repair whatever has gone wrong with it. Finally, the trials prepare both Lyra and Will for the more difficult tasks to come by testing them and forcing them to cooperate as a team.

The first and most complicated trial which Lyra and Will undergo is one to retrieve the magical objects which will aid them on their journey. This quest requires them to enter Will's home world, where they meet with Dr. Mary Malone, a research scientist of dark matter, who assists them with their quest, and with Charles Latrom (whom Lyra realizes is a man from her own world, Lord Boreal, masquerading as a citizen of Will's world), who impedes them. This trial serves as Campbell's "meeting with the goddess," as it allows Will to retrieve the knife which will allow him both to open and close portals between worlds and will be necessary for completing their quest. Mary Malone, as the goddess, "represents the totality of what can be known" (Campbell 97). As a former nun who has since devoted her life to science, she represents both the spiritual and the secular realms, and she offers knowledge freely to the children. She will return to them later in their journey to offer guidance as well.

The children experience the next two phases of this stage separately. After the pair complete this trial and escape from Boreal, Will experiences "atonement with the father" when he meets his long-lost father in the realm of Cittàgazze before the man is killed. Not long after, Lyra experiences an encounter with the "woman as temptress" when she is abducted by her mother. Mrs. Coulter has learned that Lyra is the girl prophesied to be the second-coming of Eve and knows the Magesterium is seeking to kill

her because they fear she will cause a second Fall. It is Mrs. Coulter's intention to protect Lyra from the Magesterium, but in the process of doing so, she disrupts the quest, and it is not until Will is able to rescue Lyra that she is able to continue on her way.

At the end of the Initiation Stage, Lyra undergoes an "apotheosis," or revelation, that allows her to move forward towards the completion of her quest. At this point, Lyra and Will travel to the world of the dead, which requires them to separate from their daemons (though Will's was heretofore unseen and unknown) in an excruciatingly painful sundering. Once in the world of the dead, Lyra realizes that she must exchange lies and fantasy for truth when she learns that the dead have been trapped in this world and not allowed to move on to become Dust as they should be. Though she cannot and does not fully understand what the ramifications of her choice may be, she decides that she must rectify the situation. Graham Holderness establishes that:

[t]he initial structure of Pullman's *decensus* narrative is therefore the classical search for a dead individual, one particular lost soul [Roger]

Motivated by remorse and pity, Lyra seeks atonement. But ultimately her journey exceeds this particular sense of individual indebtedness, and leads her to the world-shaking decision to liberate all the dead from their confinement. (283-4; italics in original)

Lyra's choice here is the kind of choice only a child can make. She does not hesitate or question the possible consequences of her actions; she only sees a wrong which must be corrected, and she decides to do so. Where the adults in her life have taken time to research and gather information, Lyra simply acts.

Once her decision has been made, Lyra and Will journey through the realm of the dead to find a place where they can open a portal to free the spirits of the dead from where they have been so long imprisoned. This is the "Ultimate Boon," the final step of the Initiation Phase. Lyra and Will lead the dead through the underworld, and upon reaching the end, Will opens a portal into the world of the living, releasing the souls of the dead to become Dust and restoring the balance between all of the worlds. At this point, Lyra has completed the second stage of her journey, and all that remains is the final battle which will assure her work is not undone.

In the final stage, the "Return and Reintegration with Society," events happen very quickly. When the battle is over and won, Will and Lyra, still separated from their daemons, escape into yet another world where they find Dr. Mary Malone now living with creatures known as the *mulefa* in a peaceful, communal society. This serves as their "refusal to return" in that they are seeking refuge after their ordeal in the underworld and in battle. This world provides them with that refuge, and it feels safe for them. It is in this world where, under Mary's guidance, they are finally able to complete their quest by discovering one another as Adam and Eve once did in the Garden of Eden after the first Fall, and again prove that it is Lyra's youth and innocence are what are required of her: "This delight, the delight in another being that is demonstrated by Lyra, in particular, summons to mind the innocent and unquestioning love of the very young, which is unequivocal and absolute" (Cardew 36-7). Again, she alone is able to complete this quest, this time by serving as the Second Eve, and tempting Will with a piece of fruit.

However, in Lyra and Will's story, their "eating of the forbidden fruit" does not portend a Fall, or descent, but instead a transcendence into a higher consciousness. As Kristine Moruzi states, "Pullman reworks the fall of humanity into an ascent and suggests that ascent into adulthood through sexual experience is the desired goal for children" (55). Once this is done, they have "crossed the threshold," and become "masters of two worlds," and their new awareness of Self and Other slows the flow of the escaping Dust. It is with great pain that they realize the only way to assure that the Dust remains where it should be is for Will to close the portals between all of the worlds, which their daemons have learned number in the millions. This includes the portal between their own realms, and since neither can live permanently in the other's world, this also means that they must be permanently separated. It is with great regret that they each return to their respective homes, alone but aware, to continue their lives apart, completing the third stage of the hero's journey by gaining "freedom to live."

Clearly, then, *His Dark Materials* is at heart a classic heroic tale. Lyra's journey, in particular, closely follows that of Campbell's hero. Will, while equally necessary for the fulfillment of their quest, is not the true hero of the story. His purpose, while vital, is to support Lyra as well as to provide her with a suitable partner. It is Lyra, after all, who must in the end come to understand the nature of Dust and choose to free the souls of the dead, and who then must, with both innocent curiosity and full awareness, choose to ardently embrace Will and thus transition from child to adult upon gaining the knowledge of physical love. Because the burden of making the correct choices fall upon her, it is she alone who is also distinguished as the epic child hero, and what truly makes the epic child

hero unique is that Lyra is a child, and the success of her quest hinges on the loss of her childhood innocence as it can only be ended by her becoming sexually aware. Pullman, who has expressed great disdain for Lewis's treatment of Susan Pevensie and her sexual awakening (Miller), seems to want to redeem that experience. Laura Miller states, "Sexual love, regarded with apprehension in Lewis's fiction and largely ignored in Tolkien's, saves the world in 'His Dark Materials,' [*sic*] when Lyra's coming of age and falling in love mystically bring about the mending of a perilous cosmological rift." When Lyra and Will profess their love for one another and share a physically intimate experience, the quest is complete, and they are no longer children—or heroes. For Lyra, "adulthood brings with it a different kind of stasis the permanent shape of the daemon, a freezing into a particular role, or character and a loss of the innocent delight of experimentation" (Cardew 36). In addition to this, she loses the ability to fully and innately understand the alethiometer which has guided her throughout her journey, indicating that there is a secret, sacred knowledge possessed only by children, though Pullman believes that at least some of that knowledge can be recouped in adulthood:

The idea of keeping childhood alive forever and ever and regretting the passage into adulthood—whether it's a gentle, rose-tinged regret or a passionate, full-blooded hatred, as it is in Lewis—is simply wrong.' . . . As a child, Lyra is able to read a complicated divination device, called an alethiometer, with an instinctual ease. As she grows up, she becomes self-conscious and loses that grace, but she's told that she can regain the skill with years of practice, and eventually become

even better at it. "That's a truer picture of what it's like to be a human being . . .

[a]nd a more hopeful one . . . We are bound to grow up. (Miller)

Thus, in Lyra's case, completing her quest and becoming an adult brings with it a loss of innocence, and with that, she must also be separated from Will, as he has served his purpose and must now return to his own world and seal the door behind him. However, it also allows for a new beginning and a new quest for adult knowledge; this cycle in some ways parallels the journey of Lucy Pevensie and her siblings, who journey to Narnia, live to adulthood, and then return home to resume their lives as children after an extended respite after they completed their quest. Lyra, like Lucy, returns home to resume life as a child though she has gained adult experiences.

At this point, both Lyra and Will are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually adults: they have passed through the world of the dead and returned unscathed, newly awakened to their sexuality and their morality. However, they remain children, at least physically, and are thus required to behave like children. Lyra returns to Oxford to submit herself to being educated by the Masters, and Will returns to his home and becomes the ward and student of Mary. At this point, neither Lyra nor Will is expected or allowed to act or live as an adult, even though both children have suffered great losses and earned great victories. According to Kristine Moruzi, "[t]he children return home to their subordinate position in society and, because his audience spans both children and adults, this is ultimately reassuring to those in the dominant role" (64). Thus the cycle is complete; order has been restored, and life will continue.

When the Harry Potter series first debuted in 1997, it was an almost instantaneous success, and its popularity continued to rise as the series progressed. It has become perhaps the defining children's novel series for the Millennial generation in the Western world, with many fans publicly declaring their allegiance to and love for it via tattoos, baby names, themed weddings, and collections of merchandise that includes everything from clothing and jewelry to replica props such as wands and robes.⁵ J.K. Rowling's *Pottermore* website offers fans an opportunity to vicariously participate in the world she created, allowing them to be "sorted" into one of Hogwarts' four Houses, discover their wand type, and find their *Patronus*. The site also provides an ongoing commentary about the series as Rowling fleshes out her "Potterverse" with history, genealogies, catalogs of magical species and objects, and most recently, information about other wizarding schools and the cultures in which they exist. The level of commitment to this series demonstrated by its audience is astounding, and it can only be expected that the amount of scholarship devoted to its study be vast and varied as well. From informal analyses done by readers posted on Internet fan sites such as *Mugglenet* to serious literary criticism written by noted scholars, Rowling's work has been dissected and examined from many different angles as so many readers have found something worth discussing about the series. Many fans relate to the story of the little outcast boy who finally finds his home and friends because it resonates with them and their own life experiences, and Harry's journey becomes a metaphor for their own, whatever that journey might have been.

⁵ According to Rowling's website, *Pottermore*, the Harry Potter "series has sold more than 450 million copies, been translated into 80 languages and made into eight blockbuster films."

Academic critics, too, have seen Harry's story as representative of a number of different ideas, and the amount of variation found merely in the research regarding the exploration of Harry's heroic nature and journey is worth noting. When discussing the major academic questions of the Harry Potter series, while maintaining focus on the heroic elements of the story, some critics have concentrated their scholarship on the religious, moral elements of the series and others on the impact on readers on how the series mirrors reality. One particularly interesting line of criticism which is relevant to the discussion of the epic child hero has been about the role violence plays in the series. In separate studies, David Rosen and Sarah Maya Rose, as well as Courtney B. Strimel, explore the events of series as they relate to real life wars using child soldiers and terrorism affecting child observers, focusing on how Harry and his friends navigate violence and its effect on them and how Harry's role as the hero allows child readers to vicariously experience that violence, thus helping them better understand actual violence.

Meanwhile, other critics have explored the series in terms of fantasy, mythology, and philosophy, and, in doing so, have come to a myriad of both complementary and conflicting conclusions. Maria Nikolajeva argues that the series is not fantasy but is instead a traditional romance and that "Harry is not claimed to be a god or a son of god, which, in Frye's typology, disqualifies him as a genuine mythic hero, displacing him to the level of romance" (226), and in doing so she misses the opportunity to explore Harry's status as a new type of hero or what has emerged as the epic child hero over the past twenty years. Nikolajeva goes on to argue that Harry, as a child hero, is just a tool of the adults around him (228), while Drew Chappell argues that the adolescent characters in

the novels are the empowered ones and that Harry possesses a moral authority which makes him superior to the adults around him (291). Ulrike Kristina Köhler asserts that Harry is "an English national hero" (15) and that the series is a "national heroic epic" (15); Christine Berberich deems Harry to be the "perfect gentleman-wizard" (146), thus making him "a twenty-first century manifestation of the traditional English gentleman in a new guise" (142); and Lena Steveker explores the concept that Harry represents the ideal hero of the liberal humanist philosophy and upholds "the tenets of European, white, bourgeois, patriarchal ideologies" (81). However, Yiyin Laurie Lee examines how Harry represents an alternative sort of heroism in which "Rowling challenges her readers' preconceptions of traditional, patriarchal heroism" (88). Finally, Katherine Grimes dispenses with trying to dissect what Harry actually is or is not in terms of his heroic identity and instead examines how Harry can be read in turn as a fairy tale prince, a real boy, and a traditional archetypal hero embodied in one character (90). She has also perhaps most accurately assessed why the Harry Potter series has been such a popular success that has spawned such an intense academic interest as well, simply stating that

The *Harry Potter* novels are popular because they satisfy our psychological needs. Male or female, child or adolescent or adult, we identify with this boy.

. . . Harry Potter is Everyboy and Everyman, the Everyman or Everywoman we all know is inside us, whether we are six, sixteen, or sixty, the Everyman who knows he is special, that great things lie in store for him which others do not yet recognize. (121-122)

One of the most important qualities of an epic child hero is the ability to make the right decision. Because they are children, epic child heroes often find themselves at odds with authority figures whose rules sometimes make completing their quests difficult. The epic child heroes must be capable of making judgments as to when it is necessary to disobey established authority for the sake of their quests. In most of the epic child hero stories, the theme of choice is less overt, but in the Harry Potter series, it is one of the major recurring themes. In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Dumbledore tells Harry that “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are far more than our abilities” (333). Julia Pond explains this passage as meaning that “[Dumbledore] is telling Harry that choices only 'show' or reveal character; they do not make or create it. Choice reveals true identity, which is not necessarily formed freely” (194). Harry's earliest choices, to befriend Ron and reject Draco, and his subsequent choice to reject the greatness offered by Slytherin for the friendship offered in Gryffindor, demonstrate that from the beginning, Harry unknowingly seeks to do what is honorable and right with little regard for his own ambition as he is innately good. In turn, Harry holds others responsible for their choices as well. For example, when he learns of Dumbledore's youthful affiliation with Grindelwald, he is furious:

Harry doesn't spare Dumbledore and his friend Grindelwald from criticism when he learns of their views on Muggles in their 'youth.' He tells Hermione: ‘They were the same age as we are now. And here we are, risking our lives to fight the Dark Arts, and there he was, in a huddle with his new best friend, plotting their rise to power over the Muggles' (DH 2007, P.361). Harry recognizes his own

capabilities and the moral choices he is making and expects the same from others of his age. (Chappell 290)

Harry, as the hero, has a moral authority to hold others accountable for their poor judgment, and he does not take that responsibility lightly.

However, while his choices prove Harry worthy of being a hero, it was the decision of Voldemort himself to bestow that mantle upon him. As readers learn rather late in the series, at the end of *The Order of the Phoenix*, a vague prophecy was made about a boy who would eventually grow to defeat Voldemort, but there were two boys who could have fulfilled that role: Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom. Voldemort, in his arrogance, decided to murder the boy he assumed would eventually kill him, but in doing so, he actually made the decision of who his nemesis would someday be. In selecting Harry rather than Neville, Voldemort marks him as the chosen one, setting the prophecy in motion. Voldemort assumed the prophecy was about the Potters' child because Harry, like himself, was of mixed blood, whereas Neville was born to pureblood parents. Voldemort projected his own persona onto Harry, thus marking him with the curse and creating the instrument of his own demise. Harry's parents' choice, too, factored into this: their choice to trust Peter Pettigrew rather than Sirius Black was their undoing, as Pettigrew delivered them into Voldemort's hands, and Lily Potter's choice to sacrifice herself to protect Harry was the final element which sealed Harry's fate as the child of the prophecy. In this way, the choices of the hero are of course important, but the choices of those around him influence the narrative as well, and therefore Harry's heroism does not exist in a predetermined vacuum.

Harry's heroic journey, unlike Lyra's, is cyclical. Due to the narrative structure of the text, Harry is required to undergo seven individual quests, or trials, and several smaller ones, in order to finally complete the larger quest of triumphing over Lord Voldemort, and in "[e]ach of these episodes . . . can be seen to show his growth in moral stature" (Mills 293). As in the tradition of British schoolboy stories, most of Harry's adventures span the course of an academic year which he spends at Hogwarts, a boarding school for magical children. "[Harry] will spend six years of repeatedly going through the first two parts of what Joseph Campbell calls the *hero's journey*" (Boll 85; italics in original), and each installment begins in Campbell's "Departure" phase with Harry's escape from the dreadful Dursleys and the muggle world and his passage into the wizarding world and Hogwarts. Usually, he is met with some small trial upon his crossing the magical threshold: a crisis of identity and a choice of whom he will befriend; a rogue house elf and a murderous tree; a mysterious stalker and nervous politician; a strange vision and a terrorist attack at a sporting event; a dementor attack and a preposterous trial determining his fate as a Hogwarts' student; a trip to recruit a strange new professor and the discovery that his nemesis, Draco Malfoy, has likely joined Voldemort's Death Eaters, and finally, a dangerous escape from his home resulting in the death of another wizard and his beloved pet owl, Hedwig. Each of these seven events serves as a true rite of passage for Harry, and the stakes rise exponentially each time he begins a new quest, signifying that Harry's ultimate mission will require the most of him.

During each school year, before he is able to complete the final quest and defeat Voldemort, Harry must successfully complete the smaller quests set before him when he

crosses over from the muggle world to the magical one each summer. While other students are able to simply occupy themselves with academic and extracurricular pursuits, Harry confronts far greater concerns, including facing unrelenting public scrutiny, protecting his friends, and identifying hidden threats and enemies as well as friends and allies. Throughout all of this, "[l]ife never becomes unrealistically easy for Harry . . . Like generations of mythical heroes, Harry's growth and development come at a price" (Black 244-5). In each of the seven novels comprising the series, he completes each individual phase of the Hero's Journey by departing from the muggle world and crossing a magical threshold, undertaking a series of trials and temptations, and, finally, defeating an enemy in order to fulfill his annual quest. Each smaller quest prepares him for the final confrontation with Lord Voldemort, but ultimately, the events of the first six novels in the series work together to form the whole of the overarching quest despite their ability to stand alone as individual quest narratives.

On a larger scale, it could be argued that the first four novels, *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), and *The Goblet of Fire* (2000) serve as Stage One of Harry's heroic journey (See Figure 1). He receives his call in *The Philosopher's Stone* and meets the antagonist Voldemort. However, at this point in the narrative, Voldemort is still an intangible threat. His followers and his memory are always there, haunting Harry, but Voldemort himself is incorporeal and thus almost unreal. In these novels, Harry begins to develop his skills and gather his team of allies that will aid him along his path. In *The Goblet of Fire*, however, Voldemort is reborn, and suddenly Harry finds himself facing his nemesis, alone and

under attack, his friend and classmate Cedric Diggory fallen at his side. For a few moments, it seems that all is lost, but Harry escapes, which begins Stage Two of his overall journey. In this stage, which spans the fifth and sixth novels, *The Order of the Phoenix* (2003) and *The Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and is completed in the seventh, *The Deathly Hallows* (2007), Harry's attention is divided between preparing to face his enemy and convincing the rest of the wizarding world that Voldemort has indeed returned. He struggles with increasing negative public opinions, political pressure, concerns that the people he trusts may have their own agendas, and most importantly, fears that he is doomed to fail his friends either through his own death or through an inevitable betrayal. In the conclusion of *The Half-Blood Prince*, Harry must finally face his worst fears when Dumbledore becomes incapacitated while attempting to retrieve the locket of Salazar Slytherin horcrux and is subsequently assassinated as Harry, having been magically stupefied by Dumbledore, is forced to bear witness. The death of his mentor not only releases Harry from the *stupefy* spell, but also forces him to fully assume his role of epic child hero at last.

From this point on, Harry's choices are fully his own, and once Ron, Hermione, and he are fully and officially separated from their friends, family, and the remaining members of the Order of the Phoenix in *The Deathly Hallows*, he is able to complete the second and third stages of the Hero's Journey for the final time. His two companions and he break out of the traditional pattern here and do not return to Hogwarts for what should be their final year of school but instead go into hiding while ostensibly searching for the remaining horcruxes. The trio's journey through the wilderness is mostly successful; they

are able to find and destroy the real locket of Salazar Slytherin as well as retrieve another horcrux, the cup of Helga Hufflepuff.

However, Harry soon realizes that he himself is actually a horcrux, meaning that he must decide whether or not he will sacrifice his life in order that Voldemort might finally be truly defeated. Being an epic child hero, Harry chooses to sacrifice himself in hopes that his friends will be able to triumph in battle. This sacrifice is an essential part of fulfilling his role. While it is generally expected that heroes will be willing to sacrifice themselves, in the case of an epic child hero, the sacrifice serves dual purposes, the first being to provide an overt and inspirational act of courage and the second being a way to remove the child from the story; as Radhiah Chowdhury, who refers to the epic child hero as a Child Messiah, states, "the Child Messiah . . . works . . . on the principle that the child is *dispensable*" (107); what is most important is not the child itself, but instead that "[t]he Child Messiah stands representative for the younger generations who will continue the world that the Child Messiah has saved" (107). This concept, that the epic child hero is but a means to an end, is something that is more overt in the American versions of the epic child hero and will be explored in more depth in Chapter Five, but it is not absent from Harry Potter's story. His apotheosis comes when he receives Snape's memories upon his death and learns that Dumbledore had always believed that Harry was destined to die and had thus groomed him to follow the path of the child hero, something that surprised and infuriated Snape, who accused Dumbledore of raising Harry like a "pig to slaughter." When confronted with this memory, Harry realizes that even though Dumbledore had

guided him along this path, it must be his decision to sacrifice himself so that his friends and allies can finally defeat Voldemort in combat and secure a safe future for all of them.

At this point, Harry believes that his part in the story is complete, and that his final act will be to die, thus eliminating Voldemort's final horcrux and granting Harry the ultimate boon. Once Harry decides to sacrifice himself, he slips away from his friends to face Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest. Voldemort strikes him with the killing curse. However, Harry's story does not end with his death. Instead of dying, he immediately awakens in a sort of afterlife, where he reunites with the deceased Dumbledore, who then gives him the choice of moving on to the next stage or returning to his old life. Though tempted to remain in the afterlife, ultimately the choice for Harry is simple, and he resurrects in his own body just before Voldemort confidently leads his army to Hogwarts for the final confrontation and battle with those who still defy him. This signifies Harry crossing the thresholds of life and death and returns him to Hogwarts via the magic flight, where he is finally able to destroy Voldemort and bring peace to his world. At this point, Harry is free to live his own life, no longer bound to the fate chosen for him, and he retreats to a quiet, presumably mundane, life as a husband and father as shown in the epilogue of *The Deathly Hallows*.

The role of the epic child hero is at once both equally thrilling and problematic. Several critics have expressed some concern with the agency, or the lack thereof, of Lyra, Harry, and their peers. Chowdhury asserts that these child heroes which she terms "Child Messiahs" have no identity or agency outside of their roles as the Child Messiah (108). If her assertion is indeed true, then this means that there are no rules regarding how epic

child heroes might be treated or to what treatments they might be subjected. However, in a more positive take on the matter, Drew Chappell contends that it is because the adults in Harry Potter deny the children true agency that "[i]n order to allow Harry and his friends to address the issues of power and control that the adult characters generate but seem unable to resolve, Rowling departs from the traditional construction of the modernist child hero" (283).

This supports the idea of the epic child hero being a *new* sort of hero, one that recognizes evil before it swallows up the world and who is capable of standing firm against tyranny and evil even when it appears in the form of authority and adulthood. The new hero, the epic child hero, is one who will not be moved passively through life, allowing things to happen until his or her goodness prevails in the end, but who will instead resist the evil when it first appears and withstand its influence until it is defeated. Just as Frodo was the only Hobbit who could withstand the full power of the One Ring for the duration of the journey, it is more important that the epic child hero is incorruptible in the beginning of the journey rather than the end, when at last others are finally able to join the battle. The epic child hero is the standard-bearer; the one person capable of victory when all others are destined to fail.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERFECTED HEROES AND SPIRITUAL DUALITIES: JAPAN'S
EPIC CHILD HEROES AND THE NECESSITY OF INNER DEMONS

While the epic child hero originated in the works of British authors Tolkien and Lewis during World War II and reemerged in British children's literature in the late twentieth century, it is not solely a British archetype. During the mid-1990s, around the same time that Pullman and Rowling were publishing their novels featuring the epic child hero, a *mangaka*¹ named Kishimoto Masashi² published the original one-shot version of *Naruto* in *Akamaru Jump Summer*. In 1999, he revisited the text and adapted it for serialization in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, where it ran for 700 chapters which were bound into seventy-two volumes before concluding in November of 2014 (Aoki, par. 2). In 2001, two years after *Naruto* debuted, *mangaka* Kubo Tite published the first installment of *Bleach* in *Weekly Shōnen Jump*; subsequently *Bleach* ran for fifteen years and ended in August of 2016 with a total of 686 chapters bound in seventy-four volumes (Baker, par. 2). Both *Naruto* and *Bleach* are among the ten top-selling manga of all time, *Naruto* having sold over 200 million copies (Aoki, "Part II," par. 3) and *Bleach* having sold over 100 million copies (Baker, par. 1), and each features an epic child hero, Uzumaki Naruto and Kurosaki Ichigo.

To date, *Naruto* and *Ichigo* are the best examples of the epic child hero archetype in Japanese manga and anime, as affirmed by their global popularity and acclaim. Also, given their popularity, it is apparent that the cultural values and concerns that gave rise to the epic child hero in the West are also present in Japan. This suggests that the creation

¹ manga writer/artist

² In keeping with Japanese custom, surnames of Japanese writers, critics, and characters will precede given names.

of the epic child hero is indeed bound to specific events and was conceived in order to fulfill a specific need. At the same time, the epic child hero is truly a universal archetype rather than a local one, born not of current and temporary cultural standards but instead inspired by a deep human need to embrace the essential goodness of humanity and secure a hope in a future peace.

In order to understand the development of the epic child hero in Japan, it is imperative to be aware of the context that surrounds its inception and how it differs from the context that led to the creation and the development of the epic child hero in the United Kingdom and later in the United States of America. If World War II left the Allied nations with a sense of national pride and accomplishment still celebrated today, then the opposite is true of its effects on Japan. Like the United Kingdom, Japan was devastated by catastrophic bombings during the war. However, the bombings endured by Great Britain were inflicted by an enemy seeking to destroy and conquer them, while the damage inflicted upon Japan by the United States of America in the last days of the war, ostensibly to force Japan's surrender (Stone 188). The devastation wrought by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unprecedented, and Japan finally surrendered, officially ending the war on September 2, 1945 (Stone 188).

As the losers of the war, the Japanese people were left to deal with both the literal fallout from the nuclear bombings as well as with the blows to their national psyche. Michael Gibbs explains that "At first, *circa* 1940, there was nearly universal support for the military and imperial policies of the Japanese state" (xi), but that

it took [the] Japanese several decades, beginning in the 1940s, to go from taking war for granted, as the function of the state and the duty of the people in its society, to assuming, by the 1980s, a world of peace, in which members of society had no such duty and states little or no excuse to go to war. (xi)

During the first fifty years after the war, Japanese scholars and politicians debated the causes of the war, the influence and relevance of the imperial monarchy, and the future of Japan in the post-war era, but all citizens were asked to contemplate what had happened.

According to Sebastian Conrad and Alan Nothnagle,

there was a widespread belief that fascism had plunged the country into the catastrophe. This was also the official government view of events. On August 28 1945—two weeks after the surrender—Prince Higashikuni's government demanded critical reflection on the part of the Japanese people. Under the slogan 'collective confession of the 100 million' . . . the Japanese people as a whole were to assume responsibility for the past. (86)

In other words, the Japanese government officially called upon its people to share the burden of accountability for the war's disastrous outcome. In his discussion of guilt and shame after the war, Adrian Pinnington addresses this call for Japan's national contemplation, remarking that "What is very shocking about the post-war debate, however, is the way in which it is focused, not on the views of the militarists and their supporters, but on the question of why these views had not been more effectively opposed" (96). He goes on to explain that "in other words, the question of war

responsibility was seen as essentially the question of why people had been too weak to oppose the views of the government and the militarists" (96). This shared responsibility required that the people of Japan become part of a collective resolution that would effectively serve in what might be called a national "rebooting" of political and military philosophy as well as of cultural norms and practices.

In Roland Kelts' examination of Japanese popular culture, he addresses Japanese artist Murakami Takashi's thoughts about the origins of manga and anime in post-war Japan: "[Murakami] theorizes that the dropping of the atomic bombs created a trauma in Japanese culture for which there was no precedent in world history. Publicly at least, and perhaps sensing no other option, the majority of Japanese wanted to forget their past-traumatic stresses and move forward quickly" (25). During Japan's collective recovery process, a narrative about the war, what caused the war, and what the results of the war would mean going forward began to develop. "[H]istorians agreed with the conservative provisional government in their estimation that the period between 1931 and 1945 represented an exceptional period, a 'dark valley' . . . in the nation's history" (Conrad and Nothnagle 86). In some interpretations, the war began to be thought of "as a historical necessity, as an essential component of the nation's self-preservation. In the process, the war was largely reduced to the conflict between Japan and the United States and was stylized as an anticolonial struggle between the 'East' and the 'West'" (Conrad and Nothnagle 116). Additionally, it seemed that there was an official agreement that "above all . . . the Japanese nation should be presented as a homogenous unit undivided by inner conflicts" (Conrad and Nothnagle 118). The traumatic bombings that ended the war were

a driving factor of this national introspection and unification, which ultimately resulted in how "[t]he anti-atomic movement fashioned Japan into the world's only victim of the atom bomb" (Conrad and Nothnagle 112).

It is within this political and historical context that manga took root and begins to flourish as a genre. Regarding how quickly manga grew in popularity in post-war Japan, Kelts states that Murakami believes that "[e]stablished artists . . . largely chose not to address their society's post-traumatic stress disorder" (26), and that,

According to Murakami, only manga and anime artists and their otaku brethren could do so, and they did. They were working on a lower cultural frequency, in the realm of *honne*, or real feeling, and so they were free to express what they (and others) actually felt. They were not only free to do so, they were expected to. (qtd. in Kelts 26)

This theory supports the idea that the shared national trauma allowed for the creation of a new heroic archetype, and makes a reasonable argument that the medium in which such an archetype could plausibly be created would be manga. Further supporting this is Ito Kinko's research on the history of manga, which confirms that post-war manga often expressed social and cultural themes and was also appealing to children: "The kind of *manga* that emerged after WWII reflected what was going on in Japanese society—politics, culture, economy, and race and ethnic relations—at the time of publication" (Ito 465; italics in original), and "[c]hildren's *manga* started to become more popular starting in the early 1950s" (Ito; italics in original 466). As can be expected, the war became a popular topic for manga. Maria Rankin-Brown and Morris Brown, Jr. speculate that in

post-war Japan, manga became a popular and acceptable medium of expression for artists struggling to deal with the trauma of the war, suggesting that "[m]anga artists used this medium as a way to make sense of injustice and inexplicable behavior" (82). They go on to state that "[m]anga is a necessary means of escape for many who are uncomfortable in the world they inhabit. This leads to manga and anime . . . showing the world as it used to be or as it could be from a utopic or dystopic perspective" (83).

In a close examination of the manga *Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms* (2003), Ichitani Tomoko explores the lingering effects of the Hiroshima bombing while referencing several discussions about the psychological impact of a trauma such as the bombings experienced by the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Ichitani notes that critic Cathy Caruth, in her discussions of trauma and memory, references Freud's ideas that "the impact of a traumatic event holds three features: 'it's belatedness,' 'it's refusal to be simply located,' and 'it's appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time'" (qtd. in Ichitani 375). Ichitani also explores Bessel A. Van der Kolk's and Omno van der Hart's claim that "Traumatic memories require time to be recognized and narrated because a traumatic incident overwhelms the capacity of the mind to process it" (qtd. in Ichitani 375).

In considering these two ideas, that trauma is something that can manifest in the mind of a survivor at any point after the experience of a traumatic event and that time is required for survivors to be capable of processing trauma, it stands to reason that the epic child hero archetype began to rise in popularity fifty years after a devastating global war because it took that long for survivors and their descendents to begin to be able to fully

comprehend what happened and, specifically, what the long-term ramifications of detonating nuclear weapons would be. While Western nations were devastated by the Blitzkrieg bombings, they emerged from the war victorious, whereas Japan, once seemingly unstoppable, suddenly found itself facing the wrath of the Allied forces alone after the defeat of the Axis forces in Europe, and when it refused to surrender, it became the first nation in history to experience nuclear warfare. The unprecedented use of atomic force at the end of the war effectively reset the terms of war for all nations, and according to Leo Ching, "[w]ithin postwar ruins and recovery, popular culture became important for Japan's rehabilitation from its imperial trauma and its redefinition of a new role in the Cold War order" (87).

Coming to terms with the events of the war presented Japan with a particular paradox given that while the nation had been a clear aggressor, the Japanese people were also victims of a devastating trauma, and unpacking and discussing or dealing with those events required both skill and sensitivity. Ching explains how, in an environment where it was taboo to discuss "any justification for Japanese imperialism" or "to mention any criticism of American occupation" (87), artists, philosophers, and academics turned to popular culture as a means of working through the chaos the war had brought to Japan, stating "[p]opular culture emerged as a contested site where repressed historicity could be, at least temporarily and symbolically, re-articulated, reenacted, and re-narrated" (87).

While manga was not a new literary form in Japan, after WWII it began to emerge as a mainstream genre, but "[t]he enormous popularity of manga did not rise until the late 1960s" (Allen and Ingulsrud 266). Manga artists were, from the beginning, unafraid of

tackling the issues of the war perhaps because, as "[Tessa] Morris-Suzuki comments . . . manga can depict an image of the past which other visual media are not able to capture because it is free from the norm of realism that is characteristic of photography and films" (qtd. in Ichitani 368). Not only does manga provide a unique medium of expression; Morris-Suzuki also notes that "[o]wing to its popularity and usual ingenuity, Japanese manga has been accepted by a wide range of people, having influenced the historical imagination of postwar generations, and forming the general public view of history" (qtd. in Ichitani 366). Since the 1950s, some popular topics in manga have included war, future dystopias, and stories of historical figures such as samurai and ninja and have explored issues such as nuclear warfare, governmental abuses, apocalyptic events, rebellion, and even creating peace in the midst of chaos.

Because of its immense global popularity, manga has also served in sharing Japan's story with the rest of the world. In 2005, "[a]nnual manga sales in Japan account[ed] for almost 5 billion dollars" (Allen and Ingulsrud 266), and "[s]ales of manga in the U.S. topped out at about \$210 million in 2007—at the time about two-thirds of all U.S. graphic novels—and are now [in 2011] about \$115 million" (Reid 10). In light of these figures, given the immense popularity and longevity of *Naruto* and *Bleach*, both of which feature an epic child hero who was born between two great wars, it can be assumed that these war stories still resonate with readers today, and that Japan is still working through the aftermath of World War II itself.

Outside of military and political contexts, a third cultural element is integral to the development of the Eastern version of the epic child hero that is not present in the

development of the Western counterpart, and that is religious philosophy. While the epic child hero in Western literature follows a rather linear path of development, this is not true of the epic child hero in Eastern literature. The path of the Eastern child hero is circular: not only must evil be subjugated, it must be confronted and even embraced as being part of oneself in order to obtain and maintain harmony. These ideals of balance and wholeness are valued in the major religions of Japan, Shintoism and Buddhism, as well as in the Chinese religions of Taoism and Confucianism. According to Yoshimura Sayoko, "In the Shinto worldview, the distinction[s] between . . . good and evil are unclear" (29), and "[t]he acceptance of life and death, good and evil, as inevitable parts of the world we live in, is one of the distinct characteristics of Shinto" (29). In her discussion of Japanese creation myths, Yoshimura goes on to reference Japanese Jungian scholar Kawai Hayao and his observation that "one of the basic structures of the Japanese creation myths is balance and harmony" (151), before noting that "the tendency to move towards balance and harmony despite the existence of partial conflicts and frictions is one of the salient characteristics of Japanese creation myths" (152). Yoshimura also references Kawai's conclusion that asserts "[w]e can escape as long as we continue our efforts, but evil is never abolished" (qtd. in Yoshimura 154). This is found in Buddhism as well: "From a Buddhist perspective, there can be no evil that exists separately from oneself Nothing and no one can be fixed as being inherently good or evil . . . as there are no fixed, inherent characteristics in any being" (Yoshimura 158).

This precept is also understood within the Chinese philosophy of the yin/yang, a concept expressing that all of nature—material and immaterial—is divided into two

opposing forces which must coexist or not exist at all. Yin/Yang is associated with both Taoism and Confucianism, though it is not technically a tenet of any one religion, as it "evolved within a distinct tradition. . . . [that] emerged independently of any of the individuals or communities that produced the 'classical Taoist' texts" (Kirkland 31), and it was not until Dong Zhongshu appropriated the existing concept of yin/yang that it became associated with Confucianism a few hundred years after Confucius himself taught (Slote 275). However, despite uncertain origins, yin/yang "was eventually accepted by and incorporated into all systems of Chinese thought" (Pas 370) in some form, and the philosophy is widely recognized and associated with multiple East Asian religions today. Essentially, the philosophy of the yin/yang is a concept expressing the idea that all of nature—material and immaterial—is divided into two opposing forces which must coexist or not exist at all (Pas 370-2). According to Michael Slote, "It originated . . . as a primarily metaphysical or proto-scientific distinction involving contrasts and complementarities in natural states and processes" (275). The philosophy of yin/yang is the dualistic and complementary merging of the *yin* and the *yang* energies "both as mental categories, by which reality is categorized, and as inherent powers in things or energies constituting things[;] *yin* and *yang* are polar extremes, competing and harmonizing in continuous transformation but ultimately blending in harmony" (Pas 370). The more specific and concrete descriptions of the *yin* and *yang* associate *yin* with darkness, earth, the moon, autumn and winter, rain, cold weather, mystery, intuition, emotion, death, and women; and the *yang* is associated with light, the heavens, the sun,

summer and winter, sunshine, heat, movement and activity, rationality, reason, life, and men (Pas 371).

Drawing from the religious philosophies of Buddhism, Taoism, and Shinto, then, it can be inferred that to be perfected, the Japanese iterations of the epic child hero must be balanced in all ways, meaning that they are easily identifiable as heroic by their actions but that they will also at some point manifest and conquer their darker selves which possess their more negative qualities as well. This is evident in both Uzumaki Naruto and Kurosaki Ichigo, heroes who are both incredibly powerful children possessed with even more powerful demons.³

While understanding the political, cultural, and religious context of the development of the epic child hero in Japan is essential for analyzing how the Japanese version of the archetype diverges from the Western version of the archetype, it is also essential to understand that despite this divergence that makes each individual version distinct, they collectively still share the necessary criteria that make this archetype universal. Most notably, like Harry Potter, both Naruto and Ichigo are compelled to do what is right, no matter how terribly they have been treated or how many losses they have suffered in their lives. They are both forced to confront supernaturally powerful *adult* enemies, and both must do so before reaching the age of majority, and both must sacrifice themselves time and again to be the champion their worlds require, even as more powerful and better-trained adults help and guide them but are ultimately forced to watch them from the sidelines as they engage their most powerful opponents.

³ These demons are not associated with the demons of the Jewish or Christian religions.

Like the Western version of the epic child hero, the Eastern version began to evolve after World War II. As in England, in Japan, where the world was ripped apart by lost honor and atomic devastation, the future was one thing in which survivors could invest their hope—and the future means children. After the initial rebuilding and restructuring of their society, the hopes and dreams of people living in post-war Japan are finally beginning to manifest in its literature. While the idea of young heroes had been present in earlier literature, such as in the eternal children in the film *Akira* (1998) or the young Saiyans of the *Dragon Ball* manga (1984), it was not until Naruto, who was soon followed by Ichigo, that all of the necessary ingredients for this epic child hero came together entirely.

Both Naruto and Ichigo fulfill all of the requirements of this archetype. Like Harry Potter, Naruto is around twelve when his story begins and throughout the first major narrative arc. After a narrative time-jump that allows for three years of private training, he returns home and the story resumes when he is fifteen, and he is around seventeen when it ends. Likewise, Ichigo's story begins when he is fifteen and ends when he is seventeen, though there is a two year time jump between the time he defeats the primary villain of the series (Aizen Sōsuke) and loses his powers and when he regains his powers and engages the final villain (Yhwach) of the series. Neither boy is a hero because he is randomly superior to his peers, like Superman or Spiderman. Naruto, a *shinobi*,⁴ like Harry Potter, a wizard, lives in a "world within a world." However, unlike Harry, that world is not entirely segregated from the normal human world. In Naruto's

⁴ Ninja

world, the *shinobi* live separately, but they regularly interact with humans and are frequently contracted to assist humans with various tasks. Younger *shinobis* may assist with chores or minor inconveniences such as finding lost pets, but more experienced *shinobis* engage in crime-fighting and other dangerous missions. Naruto is not unique or heroic because he is a *shinobi*; he is a hero who happens to be a *shinobi*. This is also true of Ichigo. At the beginning of his story, Ichigo believes he is a normal human boy who happens to be able to see and talk to ghosts. In the first issue of the manga, he learns that his ability means that he possesses spiritual powers, allowing him to become a *shinigami*,⁵ and that is what allows him to do heroic things. However, it is not his status as a *shinigami* that makes him heroic as there are hundreds of *shinigami* who do heroic things; his heroism, like that of the other epic child heroes, comes from his inherent need to do what is right.

Naruto and Ichigo do not stand above their peers based on their membership in any group but because they are instead specifically marked as heroes within that group. Just as Harry Potter has no outstanding attributes that would allow us to infer to his being the likely choice for a hero, neither Naruto or Ichigo is especially remarkable outside of the circumstances of his birth, even though both of their own personalities and willingness to fight for their friends are what drive them to ultimately become heroes. Naruto is marked at birth as a *jinchūriki*, as was tradition in his mother's family.⁶ He

⁵ Death god (more details to be discussed later in this chapter). (Kubo)

⁶ Human hosts to the *bijū*; Naruto's mother, Uzumaki Kushina, was a *jinchūriki*. When it was apparent she would die shortly after giving birth to Naruto, Minato divided Kurama into yin and yang, sealing the yin inside himself and the yang inside of Naruto, sacrificing his life to do so. (Kishimoto)

became the host to the *bijū*⁷ named Kurama,⁸ the *Kyūbi no Yōko* (Nine-Tailed Demon Fox), who was sealed inside of him by his father and Hokage,⁹ Namikaze Minato, when he was born. The *bijū* are immortal beasts made of pure *chakra*¹⁰ and are thus quite powerful, and being host to such a being empowers Naruto. Ichigo, unlike Naruto, is raised as a normal human whose only unique ability is that he can see ghosts. It is not until he is fifteen that he unlocks his *shinigami* powers and becomes a hero, though it is revealed later that Aizen orchestrated the events of Ichigo's conception and birth as part of his ultimate plan to create a perfect being. Therefore, Ichigo is also marked from birth as being "special," though his own personality and will are ultimately what make him heroic.

From a young age, Naruto and Ichigo are called upon to face incredibly powerful enemies. In doing so, each hero faces death on numerous occasions but does not fear dying. Both Naruto and Ichigo are, like other epic child heroes, determined to protect their friends, and ultimately their worlds, even at the expense of their own safety. Also, like other epic child heroes, the enemies they are often called to fight are enemies who have defeated and confounded more experienced warriors than either boy but who can only be defeated by the epic child hero character. It is also not their power that necessarily defeats their enemies, either. Instead, Naruto and Ichigo triumph because of

⁷ Immortal beasts made of chakra; there are nine *bijū*, numbered from one to nine with corresponding numbers of tails. The amount of tails a *bijū* possesses supposedly reveals how powerful it is, meaning Kurama is potentially the most powerful of all, though this is disputed by the other *bijū*. (Kishimoto)

⁸ One of the nine legendary *bijū* that are sealed inside of *jinchūrikis*. (Kishimoto)

⁹ The *Gokages*, or Five Shadows, were the leaders of the hidden villages in the *Shinobi Godaikoku*, or the Five Great Ninja Nations. The *Hokage*, or "Fire Shadow" is the leader of the *Konohagakure*, or Hidden Leaf Village, in *Hi no Kuni*, the Land of Fire. Minato was the Fourth, and Naruto will eventually become the Seventh. (Kishimoto)

¹⁰ Spiritual energy that enables and empowers the ninjas' abilities; it is a finite resource and must be recharged. (Kishimoto)

their determination to succeed and their desire to protect others. This is true of all epic child heroes, who often do not begin their journeys with any sort of desire to become a hero but accept the job only out of necessity. While Naruto does actively desire to become *Hokage*¹¹ someday, he does so not because of a desire for power, but instead because of a desire for acknowledgement and friendship, something that has always been denied to him.

Naruto's first enemy, Orochimaru, is a *shinobi* of great renown who seeks immortality, much like Rowling's Voldemort. Orochimaru is associated with snakes as he is both able to command snakes and to shed his own skin in his search for immortality. He desires to possess Naruto's friend and teammate, Sasuke, for one of his future reincarnations. Other powerful enemies include a secret society of powerful rogue *shinobi*, the Akatsuki; another powerful rogue *shinobi* known as Tobi; and ultimately Ōtsutsuki Kaguya, the first *chakra* user who evolved into the *Jūbi* or Ten-Tails.¹² Kaguya was worshipped as a goddess but was corrupted by her own power. She was defeated by the Sage of Six Paths and the *Jūbi* dispersed, but by the time Naruto is born, she is close to achieving her plan to return and destroy the world. Many powerful *shinobi* confront her and are slain, and the entire *shinobi* population engages in a battle to stop her, but it is Naruto who unites them and who is able to sustain them through battle, and ultimately he who defeats her and assures she can never again return. Ironically, he accomplishes all of this while he is still technically a *genin*, the lowest of the *shinobi* ranks. In the epilogue of the story, he becomes the Seventh *Hokage* while still technically a *genin* as well. His

¹¹ Fire shadow, leader of the Hidden Leaf village in the Fire Country, where Naruto lives. (Kishimoto)

¹² Before there were nine separate tailed-beasts, there was one, the Ten-Tails. (Kishimoto)

promotion to *Hokage* makes him the only epic child hero of note to further advance in power and prestige after completing his or her task, though in some ways his success parallels that of Lyra's, as it is suggested in *The Amber Spyglass* that she may someday become great herself.

Ichigo, like Naruto, is called upon to face incredibly overpowered enemies. His first enemies are basic hollows (*horōs*),¹³ though he soon must confront captain-level *shinigami*, more advanced hollows, and eventually, Aizen, a former *shinigami* captain who deceived even the most powerful *shinigami* for a century and subjugated the hollows to be his own army. To defeat him, Ichigo must sacrifice his powers, but he is the only one who is capable of accomplishing the task at all. The final enemy Ichigo must face is Yhwach, or the Almighty, the oldest and most powerful *Kuinshī*¹⁴ who declares war on the *shinigami*. In this final battle, some of the most powerful and highest-ranking *shinigami*, including the Captain-Commander, who was over one thousand years old, are

¹³ Hollows are souls of those who do not pass immediately into Soul Society, usually because they have unfinished business in life. Over time, the soul will be overtaken by sadness, anger, or other negative emotions and evolve into the hollow. Hollows consume *reishi*, or spiritual matter, and they are attracted to high levels of *reishi* and *reiatsu*, or spiritual pressure (which is related to supernatural powers). The basic hollow is usually humanoid or bestial in form with a large, solid mask; this hollow maintains some level of human intelligence. The *giran*, or *menosu gurande*, is a hollow that has consumed an enormous amount of *reiatsu*. The *giran* has the most uniform appearance of any hollows. Each one is enormous and has a matching mask with human features and is dressed in a long black cloak most closely resembling an Arabic *khimar*. Despite its size, it lacks any sort of distinct personality or intelligence. The *giran* is made up of a large number of souls, and once it has consumed a very large number of other *giran*, it can evolve into an *ajūkaku*, which generally resembles an animal and is sentient and capable of reason and again manifests a dominant personality or intelligence. The most powerful hollow is the *vasuto rōde*, a being that has a dominant personality, sentience, and human intelligence. It is believed that *vasuto rōdes* are the final evolution of the hollow progression, though no one knows for sure if it is possible to evolve into a *vasuto rōde* or if some souls are simply born as *vasuto rōdes*. It is believed that most *vasuto rōde*, unlike other hollows, are born, not evolved, though some have been awakened from lower hollow forms. (Kubo)

¹⁴ The *Kuinshī* (or Quincy) are humans with high levels of *reiatsu* and can manipulate *reishi* like the *shinigami* and are thus frequently hunted by hollow. They have developed combat skills to fight hollows as a means of protection; over time they have created an elite hierarchy and function as a sort of secret society. Their method of killing the hollows eliminates the soul rather than restoring it, which upset the balance of souls. When they refused to stop hunting the hollows, the *shinigami* declared them outlaws to be punished with death. Because of this, they consider the *shinigami* to be their enemies. (Kubo)

killed. Yhwach also destroys the Soul King¹⁵ and absorbs his power, making him the most powerful being in existence, and Ichigo is ultimately the only *shinigami* who is capable of defeating him. Once he has defeated Yhwach, Ichigo is allowed to resume a mundane life like most other epic child heroes do. Like Harry Potter, Ichigo settles down, marries his friend Inoue Orihime, and begins to raise a family.

Superficially, there are some commonalities shared by all epic child heroes. One is that they must have a physical distinction; while the significance of their appearances will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, it should be noted that both Naruto and Ichigo stand out from their peers because of some minor physical differences even from the beginning. Naruto, unlike the majority of the *shinobi* in his village, is blonde with blue eyes. He dresses in a bright orange jumpsuit, making him stand out from most of the other characters, who dress in more subdued or neutral colors. Ichigo is quite tall and lanky, but his stand-out feature is his bright red hair, which has earned him the nickname, "Strawberry" and made him the subject of much taunting and bullying from his human peers.

Both boys are minors, and like other epic child heroes, each of them has either no relationship or a difficult relationship with their parents. Naruto is an orphan, having lost both of his parents in the Third Ninja War when he was a newborn; furthermore, at his father's behest, he does not have any idea who his parents even are, which serves to further alienate him from his peers and even his own sense of self. Ichigo's mother was

¹⁵ The Soul King maintains the Soul Society and thus the balance of all worlds. (Kubo)

murdered when he was only eight, and his father, a physician, maintains distance by acting very childish and undignified, something that embarrasses Ichigo.¹⁶

Naruto and Ichigo also have a tendency to create family out of friendships and other relationships. Naruto truly has no family of his own, and this causes him to seek friendship from everyone that he meets. His teammates Haruna Sakura (female) and Uchiha Sasuke (male) are Naruto's first true friends, though he does succeed in befriending most other *shinobi* that he meets and ultimately unites their entire population against Kaguya, but that unity extends into peacetime as well. At the end of the first major narrative arc, Sasuke leaves their team to follow his own quest, and he is later replaced with Sai, whom Naruto also befriends. Sasuke, whose Yin personality is diametrically opposed to Naruto's Yang, officially becomes Naruto's rival when he leaves, and the two spend the next few years as opponents, though they finally reconnect and work together in the final battle. Ichigo befriends his classmates Inoue Orihime (female) and Yasutora Sado (male), both of whom manifest powers that make them part of Ichigo's team. His third and perhaps his best friend and biggest rival is the *Kuinshī* Ishida Uryū, whose Yin personality is diametrically opposed to his own Yang. They often work together, but they are complete opposites, much like Naruto and Sasuke. Ultimately, it is their combined efforts that allow Ichigo to defeat Yhwach, just as it is Naruto's and Sasuke's efforts that destroy Kaguya. The pairing of these two sets of friends reinforces the idea that achieving balance is a necessary element for victory over

¹⁶ Ichigo's father behaves inappropriately, like a cartoonish buffoon, because he is hiding his true *shinigami* identity from his son and is trying to protect him rather than doing so because he is actually inappropriate, though the result of his actions is that Ichigo chooses to avoid and distrust his father. (Kubo)

evil and serves to differentiate, if only slightly, the Japanese version of the epic child hero from the Western version.

In addition to close friendships, epic child heroes also tend to seek out surrogate parent relationships with adult mentors. Naruto's first teacher is his sensei, Iruka Umino, who is the first adult to acknowledge that Naruto is a worthy student and has the potential to be a great *shinobi*. For Ichigo, Kuchiki Rukia, the *shinigami* who gives him his powers, serves as that initial teacher and guide. Later, older and more talented teachers, Hatake Kakashi, Jiraiya, and Killer Bee become mentors for Naruto, while Urahara Kisuke, Shihōin Yoruichi, and Hirako Shinji oversee Ichigo's progression. For each boy, one teacher (Kakashi and Urahara) oversees their initial progress and a second (Jiraiya and Yoruichi) helps them unlock their highest potential (sage mode and *bankai*). The third teachers, Killer Bee and Shinji, however, are like Naruto and Ichigo: Killer Bee is the *jinchūriki* for the Eight-Tails, Gyūki, and Shinji, like Ichigo, is a *vaizādo*.¹⁷ These teachers are all powerful, but their students ultimately surpass them in ability.

Finally, the most important universal quality of the epic child hero is, as previously stated, the innate desire to do what is right, honorable, and just despite adversity. Both Naruto and Ichigo are driven by the desire to be and do good, and it is their honor and goodness that sets them apart from their enemies. As is the case for the enemies of every epic child hero, the adult villains only seek things that serve their own interests: immortality, power, knowledge, and wealth, and they will sacrifice anything to

¹⁷ Commonly referred to as "the visored," these are former *shinigami* who were forced to manifest a hollow form and who now have the ability to summon their hollow masks (and thus power) at will; they were evicted from Soul Society after their "hollowfication" because their dual natures are considered dangerous. Ichigo becomes a *vaizādo* when he undergoes hollowfication to access his own powers. (Kubo)

obtain those desires. In contrast, the epic child hero is completely selfless and only seeks virtuous things such as friendship, respect, unity, peace, and love. The villains cannot comprehend the motivations of their child enemies, and thus they underestimate their determination to defeat them. Just as Pullman's Dust settles over children as they transform into adults and leave behind innocence, once the epic child heroes complete their tasks, they cease being heroes and become ordinary humans again, as though they sacrifice their very childhood to defeat their enemies.

Despite the fact that the Japanese version of the epic child hero shares many universal qualities with the Western version, there is one remarkable difference between them. This difference is one that is intrinsic to the cultural and historical values of Japan, and that is that the greatest evil is not extrinsic to the hero, but intrinsic instead. In *Naruto*, that evil is in the form of Kurama, the Nine-Tailed Demon Fox. He, like the other *bijū*, has been sealed inside one human after another for several generations, and over time, humans had turned them into weapons, though their original purpose was to keep peace and balance. By the time that Naruto becomes a *jinchūriki*, most of the *bijū*, including Kurama, are resentful of humans and act as a destructive force, often influencing their hosts to commit acts of violence. When Naruto was born, a mysterious *shinobi* named Tobi tried to seize Kurama from his mother while she was weakened in childbirth and temporarily gained control of him. Tobi then ordered Kurama to destroy Konoha, and many people were killed in the ensuing chaos before Minato was able to subdue and seal Kurama once again. Because of this, Naruto is feared by the adults in his village, and his peers ostracize him, even though he does not know who his parents were

or that he is a *jinchūriki* until a rogue *shinobi* attempts to abduct him with the intention of using Kurama's power for himself.

The village's distrust of Naruto is not only rooted in the events surrounding his birth. Each beast has a distinct appearance, and some of them, such as Kurama, are modeled after animals popular in Japanese myths and legends. According to F. Hadland Davis, "[t]he fox takes an important place in Japanese legend All foxes possess supernatural powers to an almost limitless degree" (93). Hans-Jörg Uther notes that foxes "appear as a divine or demonic being in mythical narratives . . . [of] Japan" (140).

Hadland elaborates on this belief in more detail, explaining that in Japan, Inari, the Fox God, possesses "attributes for good and evil, mostly for evil, so profuse and manifold in their application that they cause no little confusion to the English reader" (93), and that furthermore, [the fox] is associated with demon possession (94). Despite the ominous claims of Hadland, however, it is primarily believed that the fox is a cunning trickster figure who wants to be fed and enjoys masquerading as a beautiful woman¹⁸ (Tyler xlvi). The villagers' distrust, fed by the attack on Konoha, would also be rooted in their assumed knowledge of fox legends. Naruto, having been left to his own devices and wildly undisciplined, had a reputation for causing trouble and playing pranks as a child.

He was also referred to as the "Number One Hyperactive Knucklehead Ninja"

(Kishimoto). Because of his playful nature and undisciplined behavior, it would seem that many of his neighbors felt justified in being wary of him and his future destructive

¹⁸ When Naruto is young, he is a bit of a slacker, but he has developed a perfected the "Oiroke no Jutsu," or "Sexy Jutsu," which involves his transforming into a beautiful woman who appears to be naked though her private areas are shrouded with mist. He uses this technique to distract his opponents. Also, Naruto is usually hungry and prefers ramen to any other food. He would definitely be thought of as having a foxy nature. (Kishimoto)

potential, which adds to his need to master his inner demon in order to be considered a true hero.

Ichigo, like Naruto, also possesses an inner demon. In *Bleach*, the human soul has the potential for two fates after death: the first is to pass into Soul Society,¹⁹ and the second is to remain on earth as a spirit and slowly evolve into a hollow, so each soul has a potential hollow within. Ichigo's hollow, however, is slightly different. His father, Kiba Isshin, a *shinigami*,²⁰ and his mother, Kurosaki Masaki, a *Kuinshī*, battled the experimental, created hollow known as White,²¹ and Masaki absorbed it during the battle. Masaki would have been doomed to evolve into a hollow herself at this point had not Isshin used his abilities to suppress the process. She later inadvertently transferred it to Ichigo, her first-born child, and it lay dormant until his spiritual powers are revealed and unlocked when he is fifteen and his story begins. Thus, his inner hollow power is not only his own potential to become a hollow himself but is instead an actual creature created by the fusion of Isshin's *shinigami* powers and White. When Ichigo undergoes his own "hollowfication" process in order to unlock his *shinigami* powers while still a living human, he awakens the hollow, who is now named Zangetsu. In a much later battle for control of his hollow form, this Zangetsu informs Ichigo that while it may be Ichigo's body they must share, "there's no way [he will] let a king weaker than [himself] hop on

¹⁹ "Dead Souls World," or home to the *shinigami* and deceased souls. Life is similar to human life, though children can be born and lifespans are extended. Once a soul dies in Soul Society, it is reincarnated as a human. (Kubo)

²⁰ "Death god." The primary role of the *shinigami* is to restore souls and grant them entrance to Soul Society. Their weapon is called a *zanpakutō*, or "soul cutter," and when they kill a hollow, the *zanpakutō* purifies the hollow soul and sends it to Soul Society as well. They also maintain the balance of souls between Soul Society, Earth, and Hueco Mundo (home of the hollows). (Kubo)

²¹ *Shinigami* captain and traitor Sōsuke Aizen experimented with souls, seeking to create a powerful being that could kill the Soul King and allow him to become a supreme god. White was created using souls of *shinigamis* but is a creature of pure instinct like a hollow. (Kubo)

[his] back and ride [him] around . . . [He] won't tolerate that kind of coexistence" (*Bleach* 220.16). Thus, it is imperative for Ichigo to master Zangetsu who threatens to subjugate Ichigo's soul and assume control of their shared body for his own purposes.

Both Kurama and Zangetsu are beings of inordinate amounts of power and they are also wild and difficult to control. Because they are uncontrollable, they function as agents of raw chaos, making them dangerous. Kurama is portrayed as being full of anger and bitterness as well, and it is revealed much later in the series that the *Kyūbi* sealed within Naruto is in fact only a portion of the whole beast, and is actually merely the "yang" to the "yin" which Minato sealed within himself upon his death. The fiery yang is unbalanced without the yin, and that, combined with the Kurama's own seething rage at being locked inside a human boy, results in his pushing Naruto to become a force of destruction rather than of peace. Similarly, Zangetsu is portrayed as a reckless and sociopathic figure who physically mirrors Ichigo, the only difference being that he is in negative—a monochromatic black and white instead of human colors. Zangetsu is prone to maniacal laughter and a violent glee, which disturbs and annoys Ichigo, and they frequently argue about who should be in control of Ichigo's body during battle. Ichigo seeks to control himself and to fight honorably, but Zangetsu is bloodthirsty and unrestrained, and while giving him control allows Ichigo to grow more powerful, Ichigo prefers being aware of his actions in combat and views relinquishing control to the hollow as a form of cheating.

In both *Naruto* and *Bleach*, the heroes engage in struggles with their inner demons and eventually master them, which increases their strength and power. Their growth

manifests in physical changes to their appearance as well as to their skills. Naruto, for example, possesses three whisker-like markings on each cheek from the time he becomes a *jinchūriki*. As he grows in strength, he begins to manifest other foxy characteristics when he enters battle, including enhanced eyesight and talons, though only the whisker markings remain when he is not in combat. He also often enters battle from a crouching position. When he draws on the *Kyūbi's* power, he also begins to manifest an aura, or perhaps more accurately, a mantle, made of the Kurama's *chakra*. This mantle resembles the form of a fox and is a fiery orange-red in color. As Naruto unlocks more power, this aura also reveals tails—the more power he draws from Kurama, the more tails manifest, and with each tail that appears, the *Kyūbi* gains more control of his host.

Throughout the manga series, Naruto struggles to stay in control of his demon, but it is not until Kurama decides that Naruto has grown sufficiently in strength and has still maintained pure intentions towards the tailed-beasts that he reveals his name to Naruto. At this point, Kurama also begins to work with Naruto instead of against him and serves as a willing teacher and guide. After they begin working together, Kurama's *chakra* no longer causes Naruto to lose control of himself, and he is able to manifest more tails at a time without fear of becoming destructive. After this, Naruto's form varies; he often appears in the more human form surrounded by the *chakra* mantle, though at times he more closely resembles Kurama.

Ichigo, like Naruto, undergoes a variety of extreme physical changes as he grows in strength and power, each one signifying a new level of mastery, though his transformations are more complicated than Naruto's because of his circumstances. In

order to fully understand the process Ichigo undergoes when struggling to master his hollow, it is necessary to outline how mastering his inner demon physically changes him. Ichigo has multiple forms and identities: human, *shinigami* (which involves multiple forms), *vaizādo*, hollow (and speculated *vasuto rōde*²²), *furubaringā*,²³ and *Kuinshī*, and his appearance in any of those identities reflects the amount of control he has over his abilities. He, like Naruto, usually appears as a human boy. However, while Naruto has the whisker-like markings of a fox while in human form, Ichigo has no apparent physical attributes related to his inner hollow while in human form. In the beginning, Ichigo believes he is merely a human who has the ability to see and converse with ghosts known as pluses (*purasus*),²⁴ something he usually finds annoying, as many of the spirits, upon realizing he can see them, reach out and try to communicate with him or try to compel him to act on their behalf. He has not, at this point in his life, knowingly encountered any hollows. When Ichigo meets the *shinigami* Kuchiki Rukia, she is tracking a hollow which is seeking to find and eat Ichigo after it has detected his *reiatsu*. Rukia is wounded in battle and cannot fight, and in a desperate move, she transfers her powers to Ichigo so that he can destroy it in her place. At this time, Ichigo only appears as a human or a

²² This is the most powerful form of a hollow; it resembles humans aside from the hollow hole and some form of a hollow mask and a weapon resembling a *shinigami's zanpakutō*. It is speculated by readers but not confirmed that Ichigo's fully realized hollow form is that of a *vasuto rōde*; it is believed by the *shinigami* that there are fewer than ten *vasuto rōdes* in existence. (Kubo)

²³ This is commonly referred to as a "full-bringer." Full-bringers are humans whose parents were touched by a hollow prior to their birth and lived; when the *furubaringās* are born, some of the residual hollow *reiatsu* is transferred to the infants, granting them a unique combat ability that is connected to an ordinary object that they treasure. Ichigo's parents, a *shinigami* and a *Kuinshī*, battled the *shinigami*-hollow hybrid, White, before Ichigo was born, resulting in White Zangatsu. Ichigo loses his *shinigami* powers during the final battle with Aizen, but two years later, he becomes a *furubaringā*, allowing him to regain them. Ichigo's *furubaringā* object is the "substitute *shinigami*" badge he had used to remove his soul from his body, and when activated, it becomes a weapon resembling the guard of his *zanpakutō*. (Kubo)

²⁴ These are deceased souls that have not yet entered Soul Society but have not yet become hollows. (Kubo)

normal, low-level *shinigami*, and his *zanpakutō*²⁵ appears as a normal sword because he is using Rukia's powers and not his own.

As a human, Ichigo's transformation into a *shinigami* requires him to leave his physical body. This is done by striking him in the chest, which releases his spirit, and a temporary replacement soul (whom Ichigo calls Kōn) is then placed in his body to maintain it while he is absent. His spirit form appears the same as his physical, except he is dressed in a white robe beneath a black kimono known as a *shihakushō*, or "garment of dead souls," that is tied with a white *obi*, or sash. He also wears traditional Japanese *tabi* sandals and socks. This attire is common to all *shinigami*, though it can be customized based on their personal tastes. The final piece of Ichigo's *shinigami* uniform is his *zanpakutō*, which has three forms: sealed, *shikai*, and *bankai*. Most of the *zanpakutō*s carried by *shinigami* resemble a traditional katana in their sealed form, though some appear as other weapons such as daggers or scythes. Ichigo's first *zanpakutō* is a ridiculously large and unwieldy sword, but the weapon is not truly his as his powers are, at that point, only borrowed from Rukia. It is not until later that he receives a true *zanpakutō* of his own.

²⁵ "Soul-cutter"; This is a tool for ushering souls into Soul Society or for fighting and purifying hollows. Each one has a name that must be learned. Ichigo's shares a name with his hollow Zangetsu. It is later revealed that there are two Zangetsus, one whom Ichigo recognizes as a mentor and believes to be his true *zanpakutō* is "Old Man Zangetsu," who eventually reveals that he is actually a manifestation of Ichigo's latent *Kuinshī* powers. His hollow, referred to as White Zangetsu for clarity, is the true form of the *zanpakutō* itself. A *shinigami* also shares an inner world with the spirit of his or her *zanpakutō* where they meet for training. When Ichigo meets Zangetsu for the first time, he initially encounters the Zangetsu manifested by his *Kuinshī* powers. This Zangetsu appears as an older man dressed in a long overcoat and sunglasses. Ichigo also meets the true form of Zangetsu, the negative-mirror image of himself that is his inner hollow. Ichigo refers to the older version of Zangetsu as "Old Man Zangetsu," but does not address the "Hollow Zangetsu," or "White Zangetsu," who disgusts and annoys him by being loud and offensive. (Kubo)

When a *shinigami* learns the name of his or her *zanpakutō*, its second form, the *shikai*, is revealed. In *shikai*, the *zanpakutō* takes on a more unique appearance, though it is usually both black and white. Ichigo is unique among the *shinigami* because his *zanpakutō*, which shares the name of his inner *horō*, Zangatsu, is never in its sealed form, which indicates that Ichigo has a great deal of *reiatsu* and power but that he is unable to control it properly. The third release, or the *bankai* form of the *zanpakutō*, is, like the *shikai*, completely personal to individual *shinigami*. Unlike the *shikai* release, which retains the appearance of a weapon, a *bankai* release can appear as anything at all; some are obvious weapons, some involve physical transformations of the *shinigami*, some are magical in effect, and some look nothing like weapons at all and may appear to be something as unexpected as millions of falling cherry blossoms.²⁶

Ichigo's *bankai* form is simple: it changes his appearance slightly and he appears in a longer, more form-fitting *shihakushō*, and his *zanpakutō* takes the form of a sleek, black katana. The majority of the *shinigami* never master their *bankai* release, and those who do only do so after years of training and experience. Ichigo, however, is able to release his within a matter of days once he begins training for it in earnest, again revealing that he possesses extraordinary powers. Most of the *bankai* release forms look nothing like a katana, so it is unusual that Ichigo's takes on this appearance in its most powerful form, especially as it does not have a sealed form and takes on a ridiculously large *shikai* form.

²⁶ The *bankai* of Kuchiki Byakuya, Rukia's brother, is deceptively beautiful. When summoned, his weapon dissolves into millions of razor-sharp cherry blossom petals that he can use to blanket his enemies and then tear them apart. (Kubo)

Ichigo's second evolution, from "substitute *shinigami*" with borrowed powers to a human with his own power, occurs after Rukia regains her own powers and is returned to Soul Society to be tried for revealing herself to a human and giving him her powers. Ichigo is temporarily powerless, but he soon gains his own *shinigami* powers when his mentor, an exiled *shinigami*, Urahara Kisuke, helps him discover them by releasing Ichigo's inner hollow, which forces Ichigo to unlock the *shinigami* powers in his own soul. This process also makes Ichigo a *vaizādo*, giving him the ability to manifest his own mask at will rather than being at risk of having his hollow take over and control him instead.

In the second arc of the manga, after Rukia's rescue, Ichigo meets other *vaizādo* for training, but he is reluctant to allow his hollow to manifest. The other *vaizādo* eventually force him to do so, as that is the only way he will be able to master its power. He eventually succumbs to the hollow, and his form changes into a human form with bestial attributes such as talons and which is completely covered by the mask. While in this stage, he lacks the ability to control his actions, which is upsetting to him. After intense training, he learns to concentrate the power into a mask that only covers his face. At this point, Ichigo is able to control his hollow, and when he draws upon its power, the mask manifests and the sclera of his eyes turn black and his irises yellow, like the other *vaizādo* and the higher-order hollows. The power of the mask has a limited duration, and when it is depleted, it begins to crack, at which point Ichigo resumes a more human appearance.

Ichigo's most dramatic physical transformation occurs in Hueco Mundo.²⁷ As a living human, at first he can only manifest the hollow mask in combat; if he releases more of the hollow power, he risks dying and becoming a true hollow. As a *vaizādo*, he learns to control the use of the mask, calling it and releasing it at will. When he travels to Hueco Mundo in his *shinigami* form to rescue his friend, Inoue Orihime, he leaves his living, human body on earth. In order to rescue Orihime, he must battle against different powerful hollows, at least one of which is presumed to be a *vasuto rōde*, to whom he falls in battle. At this point, White Zangatsu consumes him and manifests his full power. At this time, Ichigo's entire body is covered with the same material that composes the hollow masks. He retains a humanoid form, though his feet take on a more raptor-like shape, and he grows long, flowing hair and two long, curved horns which protrude from his temples and angle towards his face. Finally, his *shihakushō* is torn open, exposing a true hollow hole in the center of his chest. While in this form, he most resembles a human with a strong likeness to the original White, though he is more skeletal in appearance than anything overtly human. In this form, he is also seemingly not Ichigo; he does not speak, though he appears to be aware of his surroundings and does not harm his friends who are nearby. After his battle, the mask crumbles and falls away, and he regains his regular *shinigami* appearance. This is his ultimate and final form, though he does later experience increases in power that cause minor cosmetic alterations to his already established forms (for example, once he masters the second phase of *bankai*, his hair grows longer and

²⁷ Home of the hollows. (Kubo)

changes to black rather than orange, and when he reaches his maximum power as a *shinigami*, his attire changes to reflect additional armor).

For the British and American versions of the epic child hero, physical appearance is insignificant, but for the Japanese version, it is reflective of his mastery over the inner demon, which is essential to his ability to become a hero. Before either Naruto or Ichigo is able to truly unlock his full potential in battle, he must make peace with that demon and master the use of the demon's negative energy to defeat his enemies. When both sides of their natures are balanced, Naruto and Ichigo become truly unstoppable warriors empowered by both their own abilities as well as those of their inner demons. Yoshimura Sayoko states, "the Japanese deal with the problem of evil through acceptance and co-existence rather than through fighting and killing" (v). She also explains that "The Japanese attempt to hold and coexist with evil rather than cutting it off or eliminating it completely" (155). Kawai Hayao claimed that "We can escape [from evil] as long as we continue our efforts, but evil is never abolished" (qtd. in Yoshimura 154). However, Rahula argues there are ways to manage evil and to even conquer it, subjugating it with the power of good: "Buddha taught that the root of all evil is *avijja*" (qtd. in Yoshimura 158), which Yoshimura defines as being "a delusion which removes one from the reality of interconnectedness and mutuality" (Yoshimura 158). She further explains that, according to Harvey, "Buddha also said to . . . 'conquer evil by good'" (qtd. in Yoshimura 160). These principles are embodied by both Naruto and Ichigo, who value honor and integrity and are relentless in their quest to overcome evil, even when it lies within themselves.

In comparison to the Japanese epic child hero, the Western epic child hero must expel the demon from his or her person. Harry Potter, for example, loses his “inner demon”—the connection with Voldemort—once his enemy is defeated. Of course, he recognizes his link to Voldemort before this, making the defeat possible, but ultimately that connection is alien to his body and his nature. It is not something that he embraces as part of himself in an effort to become stronger. His path is always pushing forward; his inner reflection is limited to overcoming external rather than internal evil. He made his choice when he first arrived at Hogwarts—Gryffindor or Slytherin—and for him, the choice was always that simple. There is good, and there is bad, but never both; there is redemption for those who have been bad, but never is there reconciliation with one’s own inner darkness, much less an opportunity to embrace or channel that darkness as a strength. Whatever evil nature lies within someone, in Harry’s world, it must be expunged expediently, whereas in Naruto’s and Ichigo’s world, the evil must be subdued, mastered, and integrated into the hero’s psyche. This is, according to Yoshimura, because “As it is extremely difficult to eliminate evil, the Japanese somehow try to escape from it and to avoid the harm caused by it” (155), sometimes achieving this by “attempt[ing] to hold and coexist with evil rather than cutting it off or eliminating it completely” (155). By embracing and mastering their demons, therefore, Naruto and Ichigo are effectively lessening the amount of evil energy that is available in the world that can be passed on to future generations, which is the ultimate heroic act for the Japanese version of the epic child hero.

CHAPTER FIVE: FIGUREHEADS AND SCAPEGOATS:
THE AMERICAN EPIC CHILD HEROES

The evolution of the epic child hero reflects world history over the course of the last sixty years. World War II was obviously a defining event—if not the defining event of the twentieth century—for many nations, and this is reflected in popular culture in various literary mediums. In America, this war allowed the burgeoning superhero genre to flourish. The war had revived America after the Great Depression, and the nation was on its way to becoming an international superpower after having triumphed over enemies on two fronts. The euphoria of those successes is reflected in the thriving popularity of comic book heroes such as Captain America, Superman, and Wonder Woman, all characters who were meant to represent the best of America. They are not children but adults, each one a paragon of American virtue dedicated to upholding values such as "truth, justice, and the American Way" (R. Walsh par. 1). During the War years, these heroes came to reflect the optimistic patriotism of America: "the strong association of superheroes with national values and international interests could not be missed" (Eaton 33). More importantly, because of their medium, comic books and their audience began to serve as examples of adult role models for adolescents and children. In the mid-to-late 1940s, American children were surrounded by returning soldiers and other military personnel who were reintegrating into society after the war, and it would have been natural for those children to view those veterans as something akin to superheroes as well, as they were being celebrated for being brave men and women who served the nation and defeated the aggressors in the Pacific while simultaneously liberating the

oppressed Jews and minorities and saving the world from Hitler's forces in Europe. In a nation spared the brutal realities of war on the home front and enjoying an increasingly thriving economy with the promises of peace and prosperity, Americans had ample reason to look forward to a better world than the one they were leaving behind in the Depression years, and their need for heroes was satisfied by both the men and women who had served and were now returning home as well as a colorful cast of stalwart comic book heroes.

However, while America was celebrating the returning soldier and the nation's rise to the rank of a global superpower, nations in Europe and Asia were left with the task of rebuilding their worlds. That the first examples of the epic child heroes are found in British fantasy literature and Japanese manga is, therefore, highly appropriate. The United Kingdom, unlike America, did face war on the home front. Families were separated; Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* terrorized the population and wreaked havoc on both urban and rural landscapes, and people were all called to serve the war effort in whatever capacity they were able. The stakes for British citizens were ineffably higher than those of American citizens, and therefore, their response to the shifting cultural and political paradigms took a different form. In Japan, the citizens faced a different sort of consequence: a nation which had historically placed significant value on honor and pride found itself defeated before a global audience, and the aftermath of the detonations of atomic bombs in two of their major cities exposed even the most innocent civilians to horrors that were previously unimaginable. The generations raised in post-war Britain and Japan learned a different sort of narrative than those raised in post-war America.

As the world recovered from World War II, the philosophies of what would become known as post-modernism began to take root as people disillusioned by the monstrosities of Hitler and Hiroshima began to question the purpose of life and traditional religions and values. In Britain and Japan, the war left indelible marks upon their national psyches—marks which are still evident in literature fifty years later, as evidenced by how the war is still a popular topic for novels, television programs, and films in both nations well into the twenty-first century. Like the British people, for example, Tolkien's hobbits, representatives of the English populace (Gerrolt), face an evil in the east more powerful than anything they had ever seen before, and though they eventually triumph, it is not without the assistance of others, and though their home is saved, it is never quite the same as it had been before the war. As time passed and England and Japan recovered from their war-time losses, the post-war heroic narrative began to evolve, and eventually, began to manifest in literature for children and young adults, and finally, the epic child hero emerged in the forms of J.K. Rowling's character of Harry Potter and Kishimoto Masashi's character of Naruto Uzumaki, both orphaned young boys living in the shadows of their destinies. Neither boy is especially talented or intelligent, but each possesses the qualities of an epic child hero, and each would rather die fighting than to surrender to their enemies. Both the Harry Potter and the Naruto series reference great wars which occurred long before the protagonists' times and reshaped their respective worlds and are still causing repercussions in their own times, mirroring the impact of WWII in both cultures, and both Harry and Naruto must address lingering issues caused by the great wars in their own times.

In the same fifty years it took for writers Rowling and Kishimoto to create their versions of the epic child heroes, the American superhero stories evolved from stories of “truth, justice, and the American way” into darker fables where the (still adult) heroes wrestle with their inner demons and personal failures. Winning is not always in the cards for them anymore, and the choices they have to make are no longer clearly black or white, as evidenced by newer comics such as *Daredevil* (Stan Lee, 1964) or *The Crow* (James O' Barr, 1989) that feature casts of darker, more disturbed heroes in addition to the darkening turns taken in more recent iterations of classics such as *Spiderman*, *Batman*, and even *Superman* as heroes are more often portrayed as having to wrestle with more humanized situations that are no longer so obviously right or wrong as they appeared in dilemmas they once faced. While England and Japan had been struggling with the disillusionment of war and the decline of their empires for decades, America had been playing at superheroes—but now that game is ending, and, as in England and Japan, that change is beginning to be reflected in American children’s literature, where the games suddenly seem to have much higher stakes. The adult superheroes have fallen into perpetuity, victims of postmodern cynicism and shifting moralities, and the void is being filled by the younger epic child heroes.

The first example of the epic child hero in America is the Vietnam era's Ender Wiggin, protagonist of Orson Scott Card's science-fiction novel series *Ender's Game*. However, the text was not marketed as a children's or young adult novel when it was first published, meaning that the first incarnation of the American epic child heroes found in post-World War children’s and young adult literature did not officially appear in America

until the twenty-first century, when the events of September 11, 2001, irrevocably shook the American psyche, and Americans finally experienced the reality of a devastating bombing within the boundaries of what had been their formerly untouchable nation. For Americans, the events of 9/11 meant that war was suddenly not something that happened “over there,” but it was instead a new possibility that could happen anywhere, at any time, even on a peaceful Tuesday morning when New York was entering the splendor of its celebrated autumnal season. In the introduction to a collection of essays about *The Hunger Games* series, Mary F. Pharr and Leisa A. Clark address the rise in popularity of dystopian fiction and speculates as to why readers find comfort in this type of story when reality itself is yet so bleak:

Thus, it seems only fitting that within the last decade [2000s], dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction has come to the forefront of science-fiction written for the YA audience. In addition to and beyond the fear of technological catastrophe, the rise in dystopian and postapocalyptic fiction may be linked to America’s response to the events of September 11, 2001. Dystopian and postapocalyptic novels seem both to evoke and relieve the mind-set of fear and isolation felt by many real-world people after the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. ("Introduction," par. 7)

Essentially, then, in the years following 9/11, an influx of increasingly post-apocalyptic and dystopian-themed novels featuring exceptional heroic protagonists began to fill the shelves in children's and young adult literature sections of bookstores and libraries, reflecting a darkening shift in the American attitude and Americans’ increasingly

negative sentiments about the future, and yet, as noted by Pharr and Clark, they were actually offering a sort of relief from that darkness as well. This shifting in attitude is what allows American epic child heroes to be firmly situated in what Northrop Frye calls the "demonic human world" (147), which Frye describes as a society formed by its citizens' loyalty to the group as a whole or to a specific leader:

In the sinister human world one individual is the tyrant-leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is egocentric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers. The other pole is represented by the *pharmakos* or sacrificed victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others. In the most concentrated form of the demonic parody, the two become the same. (147-8)

In the American version of the epic child hero story, the child is the intended *pharmakos*. Unlike the British and Japanese versions of the narrative, where epic child heroes are supported and aided in their quests and the adults around them work very hard to protect them from danger, in the American versions of the story, it is the adults who are grooming the children and thrusting them into fray. As will be proven in this chapter, American epic child heroes are created to be pawns on military chessboards, maneuvered by adults who view themselves as the player-kings. The victories achieved by the children will of course be celebrated by the adult leaders, but ultimately, they have little need for the child protagonists beyond using them to achieve their own military and political goals. Because of this, the search for the archetype of the epic child hero in American children's and young adult literature adds Frye's polemic to its criteria; the

child in question is not only a child of prophecy and fate in the classic mythological tradition but one who is also selected and groomed and yet who lacks a network of adults to advocate for his or her best interests over the interests of the tyrant-leader, whether that leader is an individual or society itself. For American epic child heroes, there are no Mrs. Weasleys or Ma Costas to mother them; there are no wise sages such as Jiraiya or ancient warriors such as Kisuke who can stand beside them in battle. Any adult assistance they receive is terminated when they take up arms and enter the battlefield; they must be willing sacrifices in order that they may also be worthy sacrifices. The worlds that these children inhabit are not the familiar or cozy ones; they do not resemble Harry's homey Hogwarts or Lyra's steadfast Oxford; nor are they the highly organized and orderly realms of Konoha or Seireitei where Naruto and Ichigo are called to keep order. They are worlds which have been upended and redefined by catastrophe, worlds sprung from reactionary politics and fear of outside threats, and because of that, the rules are changed, and while children are still meant to be protected, no "child" is guaranteed protected status, and no one is safe at all.

One of the American novels which surged in popularity after September 11 was *Ender's Game*. Its author, Orson Scott Card, never intended it to be considered as part of the children's and young adult genre when it was published as a short story in 1977 or as a novel in 1985, but it found its new audience in the twenty-first century, fueled by the surge of new dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction being published as the world began to shrink. Inspired by classic science fiction as well as the Vietnam-era military (Card, "FAQ"), *Ender's Game*, according to Card, "was written with no concessions to young

readers" ("Looking Back") and was originally published and marketed as pure science fiction and only began to be heavily marketed for young adults in the twenty-first century. It is currently found on shelves in both science fiction and young adult sections of bookstores and libraries and has recently begun receiving attention from critics of children's and young adult literature in addition to critics who specialize in science fiction and fantasy literature, likely because of the 2013 film adaptation of the novel. However, the resituating the novel could reflect a shift in adult attitudes about children and what they need, as well. Perry Nodelman states that "to produce children's literature at all, adults have to believe that children need such a literature—that there is something specifically unadultlike in children that requires a special form of literary engagement, texts different from the ones adults produce for each other" (148). While relocating a book in the library stacks is not quite the same as creating that book in the first place, the fact that at some point, an adult or some adults decided to make that move begs the question as to why. Card himself seemed taken aback to learn that his work had become something adults wanted younger readers to consume ("Looking Back") as he never intended the novel to be a children's novel, but at some point in the past decade or so, it has been labeled as such despite Card's intentions. In light of Nodelman's argument, this would indicate that perhaps there is something that adults want from children that they believe the novel can produce if children engage with the text.

In many ways, it is structurally similar to a classic boy's school story in that Ender Wiggin is sent away to school for the duration of the first novel, and the adventures he has while at school comprise the bulk of the narrative. Thematically, however, the novel

addresses more complex issues than those found in traditional school stories, as Ender and his fellow students are being trained as soldiers and are expected to behave as such despite their youth. Its transition to a new audience in children's and young adult literature, signifies the shift in the American psyche brought about by the events of September 11; stories of war and violence are no longer inappropriate for child readers, many of whom are the children of parents born in the Vietnam era themselves, and while they were never strangers to the realities of the wars waged on the evening news, they were still not reading about children experiencing that violence themselves.

Ender Wiggin, the protagonist of *Ender's Game* and other books in the "Enderverse," is the first incarnation of an American epic child hero. In his discussion of the evolution of Ender from his first appearance in the 1977 short story to his reemergence as the protagonist of the first novel in what would grow to be a lengthy, fully-fledged series, George Slusser asserts that Ender's power exists because he is a child, and that the only way to retain that power is for him to remain so.

Card's first Ender story, published in 1977, offers an eleven-year-old hero who, acting to save the human race by destroying its enemy in an intergalactic war, leads an "army" of seven-, eight-, and nine-year-olds. In the novel, published eight years later, Ender becomes a consummate strategist and efficient killer at the tender age of six. To draw power, he must remain at this stage. (76)

This concept is essential to the definition of the epic child hero, thus Slusser's assertion that Ender "must" remain a child. Once adulthood is reached, the power wanes, and the child hero becomes an ordinary person. Radhiah Chowdhury echoes this sentiment in her

examination of what she terms the "Child Messiah," stating that they are denied normal periods of immaturity as they have no identity or agency outside of their role (108), and that the Child Messiah is doomed to a "loss of childhood," which she asserts is the "worst possible outcome" (108). Ender is perhaps the youngest of the epic child heroes as his story begins when he is six and ends when he is twelve, meaning he is truly still a child, unlike most of the epic child heroes, who, with the exception of Lyra, are on the cusp of adulthood when their stories come to a close, and even Lyra experiences puberty and physically and emotionally transitions from childhood to adolescence as her story concludes.¹ Ender, on the other hand, has been trained to lead entire armies, to think like an adult military leader, and even how to be a pragmatic killer, and has, for all intents and purposes, committed xenocide against the Formics before he even enters puberty. As Dink, one of his fellow students and a member of his squad, states, "I've got a pretty good idea what children are, and we're not children" (*Ender's Game* 108)—and yet, that is exactly what Ender is, above all else, even though his actual childhood has been wholly denied him.

Ender, like other epic child heroes, represents the salvation of his race and his world, and he is groomed from a young age to become such. He is not an orphan, though his parents and he never truly engage in an emotional relationship as he is a "Third," a child who is not supposed to exist in a tightly regulated world with strict laws regarding population control, thus satisfying the requirement that the epic child heroes must be, for all intents and purposes, outside of a normal parent-child relationship. His very existence

¹ Technically, Harry Potter and Uzumaki Naruto go through puberty during their quests as well, but their quests do not end at or before the onset of puberty, as do Lyra's and Ender's.

is owed to the government, which allows his family to have a third child in hopes that this one will have both the strategic mind of the eldest, Peter, and the remarkable empathy of the second, Valentine. Because of this, Ender is always outside the family circle, since his parents fully expect him to be taken away from them when he is still very young and are thus encouraged to keep an emotional distance from him. In this way he *is* a child of prophecy, for the government is counting on the third Wiggin child to embody the exact qualities they are looking for in their savior and are basing their hope on what they know of his older siblings. Of course, their hopes are rewarded, and they find in Ender that blessed mix of qualities they so desire, and when he is only six, they whisk him away to the interstellar Battle School, isolating him from his family and effectually making an orphan of him. He is left with only his mentor, Colonel Graff, who is aloof and vague, as is required of the mentors of epic child heroes. Ender has a small group of cohorts who pass as friends and offer advice and support as needed as well as controlled and limited contact with Valentine, whom Graff uses to manipulate Ender when Ender's empathy overwhelms his ability to function as a ruthless leader and threatens Graff's goal of turning him into an admiral. While this group of cohorts is not exactly a group of friends in the sense that Hermione and Ron, Sasuke and Sakura, Orihime and Sado, or Roger are to Harry, Naruto, Ichigo, and Lyra, respectively, Ender's closest possible friends are his "shadow," Bean, and his sister, Valentine, who ultimately serve as his most significant companions. Regarding his enemy, in Ender's mind, there are two: the distant Buggers (properly known as the Formics), the unseen alien race he is destined to annihilate, and, closer to home, his sadistic and brilliant brother, Peter, who haunts his nightmares as

Ender fears both being destroyed by Peter and becoming like Peter, whom he both detests and loves. Both enemies loom over Ender's mental landscape (quite literally, as evidenced by their constant presence in the training activity which was personalized with their own fears by their academy's computer system), threatening him with every choice he makes, their presence driving him to succeed.

Ender's peer relationships are of much interest to the adults in his life, notably Graff and other instructors, who exploit his negative relationship with Peter and his fear of bullies in general in order to further mold him into their ideal hero. In an essay exploring the violence and the fictional child soldier, Sarah Outterson Murphy asserts that "Ender's teachers repeatedly place him in physical danger from bullies and manipulate his reality in order to shape him into a perfectly self-reliant and ruthless killer, a precociously powerful hero who can defeat aliens for them" (par. 4). At the same time, they also manipulate his relationships with friends, allies, and his sister for the same reasons. Where the epic child heroes in other cultures are encouraged to have normal relationships with their peers, Ender's handlers use his relationships as nothing more than a means to an end, and Ender is denied the opportunity to relax into a normal friendship at any time, pushed instead to rely on no one but himself, even to the point where he is unable to seek counsel in battle or comfort in loss. At any point that he becomes too friendly with his classmates, he finds himself moved into other armies lest he become dependent on others for any reason or any length of time at all. Furthermore, Ender's peers are aware of his status, and his "shadow" and understudy Bean even understands that Ender's position is essential to the narrative being so carefully crafted by Graff and

the other leaders: “Bean realizes that it is Ender who is the leader, that if he were to try to take over, the ‘story’ of Ender the invincible child hero, perhaps the story of all of them as invincible child heroes, would be proven false” (Doyle 312). The relationships Ender forms, then, are carefully monitored by adults who manipulate his friends and him as mere players in the game they are grooming Ender to win, another factor which separates the American version of the epic child heroes from its British and Japanese counterparts.

Finally, as a component of the previously established requirement for epic child heroes, Ender’s task can only be fulfilled by a child. Graff himself states this repeatedly throughout the novel, insisting to those who are skeptical of him that Ender’s youth is a necessary ingredient for his plan to succeed, for he believes that no one except a child would be capable of making the ruthless decisions that would need to be made to completely annihilate their enemy as long as that child believes he is only playing a game. George Slusser notes in "The Forever Child" that “In his trajectory Ender mirrors the progress of a peculiarly grotesque form of romantic child worship in American popular culture" (75), though at the same time, as Sara Day contends, “the novel as a whole rejects the romantic concept of childhood as pure, innocent, and moral” (224). Ender himself is a peculiar mix of adult and child in that while he is a brilliant strategist capable of planning for and executing his own offensive moves far in advance as well as of anticipating for a variety of counters and being able to adapt quickly to each of them, he is also oblivious to exactly how his adult handlers are using him until they reveal what he has done after he completes his task. Like any child, he believes that the adults in his life have been honest with him about their expectations, and he accepts the idea that he is

merely being trained to lead armies into battle, an event he presumes to be far in his personal future. He never suspects what their true intentions are, even though he knows and understands what they expect of him and that they have allowed other children to be killed (by him, no less), suggesting that they can and will take extreme measures to assure their goals will be achieved. As Day states, "One consequence of the moral ambiguity portrayed throughout the novel is Ender's inability to decipher his own role in the adults' war against the alien buggers; despite his awareness of the adults' lies, Ender approaches his final exam without correctly perceiving the situation around him" (222). This novel introduces the idea that the epic child hero can exist as an archetypal character even when the parameters of the archetype are stretched and falsified in order to achieve results. In one way, it can be considered an elaborate staging of a play in which everyone except for the protagonist is aware of the performance, complete with a live audience. The epic child hero as protagonist must speak the lines and perform with the other cast members until the truth is revealed, at which point he or she may entertain the option of going off script entirely or continuing the performance as a willing participant. Therefore, Ender, unlike the epic child heroes before him, is unaware of the fact that he is actually fighting a war at all: Graff and the other leaders have led Ender to believe that he is only leading a battle-simulation exercise that functions as a competency exam while he is in actuality commanding an army in live battle. Thus, at the age of eleven, Ender annihilates an entire race of alien beings and leads thousands of his own soldiers to their deaths without fully knowing or understanding what he is doing.

This omission by the adults is not a move to protect his psyche; it is a strategic choice made to ensure that he does not second-guess his decisions by stopping to consider the cost of human life and that he takes the necessary steps needed to assure that the enemy is completely destroyed without having time to wonder if that indeed is the morally correct course of action. In his examination of Ender as an "innocent killer," John Kessel addresses this very point, stating that,

The commanders view Ender's killing his adversaries not as an unfortunate overreaction, but a valuable trait. They need someone who will go to that extreme, they create Ender to be such a person, and they justify it afterward. So the fact that Ender succeeds in winning the war by totally destroying the enemy can hardly be called an unintended consequence. (91)

They are not interested in the fact that Ender never *intends* to kill anyone—not Stilson or Bonzo, the bullies who torment him, and certainly not the soldiers he sends to complete suicide missions against the Formics. He also never intends to actually commit xenocide, but he is never given the opportunity to make the decision for himself. Kessel argues that Card himself must have struggled with the idea of the xenocide and asserts that the author "labors long and hard . . . to create a situation where we are not allowed to judge any of his defined-as-good characters' morality by their actions. The same destructive act that would condemn a bad person, when performed by a good person, does not implicate the actor, and in fact may be read as a sign of the person's virtue" (88).

Referencing an interview given by Card in a 1990 article in *Publisher's Weekly* where he discusses voluntary sacrifice, Kessel argues that,

In every situation where Ender wields violence against someone, the focus of the narrative's sympathy is always and invariably on Ender, not on the objects of Ender's violence. It is Ender who is offering up the voluntary sacrifice, and that sacrifice is the emotional price he must pay for physically destroying someone else. (92)

Kessel is contending that "Card argues for a morality based on intention" (86). This argument presupposes, of course, that the readers, like Ender, will be horrified at what he has done, despite the premise that they, the readers, would be part of the nameless billions in whose names Ender is fighting, thus simultaneously supposing that those unseen citizens in the novel itself would also be as horrified as Ender and the readers, even as they also understand that what Ender has done assures them safety from future Formic attacks. This cognitive dissonance ultimately leads to Ender's isolation; as one who has proven to be so strategically ruthless at such an early age, his potential as a weapon is too great to allow him to return home: "However cynical and cruel the manipulation, the fact remains that Ender is a weapon here, a weapon created not by accelerating the normal path of formation, but by forcing the juvenile hero back to a state of childhood 'innocence'" (Slusser 79). In an even more cruel twist, Ender, who is ultimately empathetic, even tenderhearted, is not even given a proper period of debriefing to help him transition back into a normal life of any sort, and he is left to grieve and heal on his own, at which point, Chowdhury notes, "[h]is ability to empathise now turns on him, and he is filled with such self-loathing he is made physically ill by it. . . . There is no period to heal; his friends are removed and he is exiled to the Colonies. The adults are

uninterested in his healing process, even going so far as to scapegoat him for the xenocide he is made to commit” (109). Ultimately, then, Ender exists to serve one purpose, and once he has done so, the adult leaders in his world have no need for him any longer.

It would seem, then, that in its first incarnation, the American version of the epic child hero is not akin to the British version of the epic child hero who is unquestionably morally superior and good, capable of making difficult decisions that satisfy both morality and strategy; nor is he akin to the Japanese epic child hero who has embraced both the good and evil parts of himself and learned how to control both the darkness and light without truly abandoning either. No, the American version of this epic child hero is an altogether new creature—a child that embodies an image of the purity of childhood yet who also a highly honed weapon in the hands of his superiors. This epic child hero is a commodity to be used at the will of the adults who recognize the value of making their hero a child and have no qualms with doing so. Ender is, as a child, capable of committing xenocide without suffering true consequences, and because it was his decision and not theirs, his adult handlers are free from the threats of punishments for war crimes as well. Unlike Frodo, or the Pevensies, or Harry, Lyra, Naruto, and Ichigo, the adults and authority figures in Ender’s life are not there to support or guide him into adulthood, hoping all the while he will grow to make the right decisions; their hearts are not so troubled when he questions his capacity for ruthlessness, and they do not even truly fear for his well-being along the way, and, unlike Dumbledore, who knowingly guides Harry on his way, they are unrepentant for what they do to him. He is, at all times,

merely a weapon being formed for battle, a child behind whom they rallied for a time, but who is ultimately unfit to live in the world which he saved.

The second manifestation of the American epic child hero is Katniss Everdeen, protagonist of Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* trilogy. Katniss, the first epic child hero of the twenty-first century, was created at a point in history where events happen in "real time," and access to information is immediate. No longer is there even the brief delay of telegrams and phone calls needed to spread information; news anchors interrupt scheduled programming to report on special circumstances often before there are even any concrete details available to be shared. People capture unfolding events with cellular phones and computer tablets, eager to pass breaking news along by posting photos and videos to their social media forums. When Orson Scott Card witnessed the events of the Vietnam War, it was via pre-recorded footage accompanied by the narrations of solemn news anchors; when Suzanne Collins learned of the events of September 11, it was likely via broadcasting of live footage and instant replays; there are multiple camera angles and perspectives accounted for in the vast catalogue of photographs and film from that morning, and television stations replayed all of them for weeks after the event, saturating the world with the images of the falling towers. However, despite the fact that every piece of information that might possibly be newsworthy, noteworthy, or of passing interest to the public is now being recorded and shared with startling alacrity thanks to the Internet and social media, that same information is also subject to manipulation by using technology that can apply filters to alter images or even simply to change them altogether, meaning that it is not always possible to trust the truth of photographs or video

footage. At a time when technology has made information the most accessible it has ever been, it has also made it the most unreliable it has ever been as well, and even events as well documented as those of September 11 are often held up to intense scrutiny by those who do not trust the government or media not to stage tragedies in order to better exercise control over the general population of citizens.

This fear of living in an official surveillance state is a legitimate one in *The Hunger Games* series, as the world of Panem is filled with technologies that allow President Snow and his regime to control the flow of actual information in order to manipulate the citizens into believing what he wants them to believe, permitting him absolute domination over the population. As a citizen of an outlying District in Panem, Katniss's knowledge of her country is limited; she knows only what information is filtered to the Districts via the Capitol network, and until she is forced into the Hunger Games, it never occurs to her that she could, and perhaps should, learn more about her world. Before the Games, she is solely focused on keeping herself and her family alive by hunting and gathering food for them after her father's death and her mother's mental collapse. She is unhappy with her life and the general state of affairs in her District and her nation, but she has no revolutionary inclinations, and her only rebellion is her routine of slipping through the District's perimeter fence so that she can hunt, a practice which often benefits the local law enforcement as well as her family, friends, and neighbors, and therefore goes officially unnoted and thus unpunished. Her sole desire in life is to survive so that her younger sister Primrose (or Prim) will never know hunger or lack, and her deepest fear is that she will fail to protect Prim. When her sister's name is drawn at the

annual reaping, then, Katniss's worst fears are realized, and she volunteers to take her sister's place—not out of any desire for personal glory as Tributes in other districts have been known to do or to make the political statement that others will make of it but instead solely out of her need to protect her sibling from harm. This is what first distinguishes her as a voluntary Tribute: “They [the Careers who volunteer] long for the arena, and although the person being replaced may find the action a favor of sorts, a Career’s choice is never received as an ethical act from the position of the consuming audience. . . . In contrast, no one regards Katniss’s decision as that of a willing participant” (Risko, par. 12). It is this, though she does not know it, that is the first step on her path to becoming the Mockingjay: “Katniss’s sacrifice is more instinctive than calculated—but it makes an impression on the TV audience that neither the Capitol nor Katniss initially expected” (Pharr, “From the Boy Who Lived to the Girl Who Learned” par. 10). Her instinctive choice resonates with the citizens of her own District as well as with the greater population of Panem, setting her up as a Tribute to watch, and more importantly, marking her as a Tribute willing to sacrifice herself for another, a necessary instinct for the long-awaited figurehead of the Revolution. For Katniss, however, it is not until she is in the midst of the Games, when she bonds with and then subsequently suffers the loss of her fellow Tribute, Rue, that it is no longer enough for her to be a protector and a sacrifice, and her desire to defy the government awakens, urging her to aspire to something more than survival.

In the first arena, when Katniss chooses to cover Rue's body with flowers, marking her death as being both significant and tragic in addition to humanizing the girl

she was rather than allowing the Capitol to dismiss her as a merely irrelevant player in the cast of their annual Hunger Games, she demonstrates that while her choice to volunteer to take Prim's place was made out of familial love and loyalty, her protective nature and personal code of honor extend to those outside of her family as well. In the first true expression of allegiance to her outside of her own District, the citizens of District Eleven acknowledge her memorial of Rue with an act of gratitude of their own—sending her bread—which proves that she is indeed someone who inspires trust and loyalty in others, thus increasing her value to the rebel cause. However, while her selflessness and defiance certainly make the revolutionaries take note of her, Katniss makes the decision to stand against Snow on her own, unaware that her realm is full of insurgents who have only been waiting for a Tribute whom they can cast as the figurehead to their revolution. From the instant she chooses to publicly mourn Rue, Katniss is determined to openly flout Snow in every possible way, even though she believes she will not survive the Games—ironically leading to her trying to please him with obedience when the Games are over and she realizes her family is still in danger from him. Her very nature, however, resists her will to obey Snow when he threatens her on the eve of the Quarter Quell, and even though her defiance endangers her and everyone she loves (or is even loosely connected to), she is ultimately unable to pretend that the events which transpired during her first Games were insignificant to her. As Peeta and she travel through the Districts for their "victory" tour, her empathy for the families of the fallen Tributes overwhelms her, and against her orders to stay on task,

Katniss is compelled to honor Rue's death when she sees Rue's family at their stop in District Eleven:

A wave of shame rushes through me. The girl is right. How can I stand here, passive and mute, leaving all the words to Peeta? If she had won, Rue would never have let my death go unsung. I remember how I took care in the arena to cover her with flowers, to make sure her loss did not go unnoticed. But that gesture will mean nothing if I don't support her now. (*Catching Fire* 60)

Katniss is conscious of the power of her tribute to Rue in the arena, and she is unwilling to pretend that what she did meant nothing; to her, that would be admitting that *Rue* meant nothing, something she will not do. As her words honoring Rue and her fellow District Eleven Tribute, Thresh, echo through the crowd made up of their friends, families, and neighbors, silence falls; her defiance is simple, but she speaks for all of the people who have lost children to the Games as she thanks the families of Rue and Thresh. When she thanks District Eleven for sending her bread in gratitude for her acknowledging Rue's death, she sees, for the first time, that her words have the power to incite people as they pledge their allegiance to her. "The full impact of what I'd done hits me. It was not intentional—I only meant to express my thanks—but I had elicited something dangerous. An act of dissent from the people of District 11" (*Catching Fire* 62). At that moment, Katniss recognizes the power she wields, and she is terrified, knowing that she has, however inadvertently, defied Snow's edict that she defuse the spark of rebellion she had ignited during the Games. It is this moment when Katniss becomes cognizant in ways other epic child heroes, even Ender, cannot be, because she is

the only one who is ever aware of her power and who is therefore able to make deliberate choices about how to use it well before having to make the final choices that face all epic child heroes.

Aside from her self-awareness, in most ways, Katniss completely fulfills the standard requirements for the epic child hero, including having an absent or estranged relationship with parents or parental figures; a close-knit circle of peers who serve as companions, foils, and moral support; older, wiser mentors who know more about her and her future than she herself does; and an impossibly powerful villain whom she should not be able to subdue or defeat as well as a cause which is much larger than she herself could ever imagine; and, as a final condition, she must fill the role of the chosen hero. While Katniss is not an orphan, her father dies in a mining accident when she is only eleven, which causes her widowed mother to have a psychological breakdown, thus rendering her incapable of taking care of her children and leaving Katniss to provide for their family. She has two trusted companions, her sister Prim and her friend Gale (whose role will later be primarily filled by Peeta), who provide her counsel and camaraderie. Others sometimes fulfill the role of friend as well, most notably, Joanna Mason and Finnick Odair, fellow Tributes in the Quarter Quell who rally behind her in the revolution. She also has a reluctant and recalcitrant mentor in Haymitch as well as a loving and kind one in Cinna. Haymitch is candid with her about his doubts about her ability to survive; Cinna, on the other hand, encourages her and expresses his faith in her abilities even when his own death is imminent, but each man knows what she means to Panem and the revolution long before she herself does. Ultimately, Katniss's team is a

motley one, and, as Mary F. Pharr recognizes in her comparison of Harry Potter's story to Katniss's, "All epic heroes have companions and mentors. But Katniss's supporting cast is more emotionally complex than Harry's—more troubled, more vulnerable, finally more realistic and so less likeable than Harry's team" ("From the Boy Who Lived" par. 11). This, in some ways, separates her from other epic child heroes, whose circles of friends are more homogenous and less damaged; the members of Katniss's support system indeed need her as much as she needs them.

Regarding the final qualification necessary for being marked an epic child hero, Katniss is not officially a child of prophecy; however, like Ender, it is apparent that the leaders of the Revolution have been planning and waiting for a Tribute like her for some time: when Katniss volunteers to take Prim's place in the Games, the revolutionaries move into action, the players assuming their places on the stage, working with Haymitch behind the scenes to help her survive, and Cinna positioning himself as her stylist, all waiting to see if she will survive long enough to be able to truly metamorphose into their long-awaited figurehead. From the moment she volunteers in Prim's place, with her every act of defiance, the net tightens around her, and her destiny as the Mockingjay unfurls; however, Katniss, unlike other Epic child heroes, ultimately determines that her service as the Mockingjay will be fulfilled on her own terms. In doing this, Katniss has not only volunteered as Tribute, but "has chosen her own death, moved away from her own stability within the world, and given up on the possibility of existence. . . . [which] allows her to take even more revolutionary politic actions later in the narrative" (Risko par. 16).

As the events of the series unfold, Katniss demonstrates her understanding that hers is the face people will see when they choose their side in the war, regardless of how she herself feels about being their champion. This is visibly evidenced throughout Collins' text, for despite the fact that many citizens are unhappy and actively desire change, the revolution in Panem would not be possible without Katniss, since the adults need a willing Tribute whose image they can exploit to incite the passions and emotions of an oppressed citizenry. It is abundantly clear that Katniss herself is no longer necessary to the revolution once the Capitol has fallen. Additionally, her influence over the people of Panem is a threat to the authority of the revolution's leader, President Coin, who ultimately desires to make a martyr of Katniss in order to rid herself of the girl's threat as well as to enflame further the rebelling populace and thus cement their loyalty to her instead of to Katniss. In Coin's mind, the individual lives of Katniss and those closest to her are prices she is willing to pay in order to secure her own power and bring down Snow's regime; she understands what the loss of the Mockingjay will mean to the people of Panem, and she is willing to take advantage of that emotion for political gain. As she becomes more deeply entrenched in her role as the Mockingjay, Katniss gradually realizes that Coin wants her martyred, and therefore, unlike her epic child hero counterparts, she becomes aware not only of her heroic status but also of how her status is just another commodity to be bought and sold in her world. This awareness then enables her to take control of her own story to some extent, giving her the power to prevent her life from being wholly scripted by others who value only how she can assist them in achieving their own selfish goals.

Where there is a sense of an inevitable destiny being fulfilled in the stories of other epic child heroes, there is a wild unpredictability in Katniss's story because of her self-awareness, making her the first true example of a fully self-actualized epic child hero and setting her apart from her predecessors. Where Ender is guided down his path by his family, his teachers, and even his friends, Katniss actively attempts to control her own fate, insisting that she is unfit to serve as a hero and requesting that Haymitch protect Peeta and allow him to represent the Rebellion instead. When that effort proves to be futile, Katniss reluctantly agrees to be "their Mockingjay" and encourage the citizens of other Districts to join the Rebellion, but she soon proves that she cannot—and perhaps more importantly, *will* not—cede her autonomy to anyone else. By this point in her story, she has come to understand how advertising and propaganda affect people, and she also recognizes, at some level, that the Rebellion cannot succeed without her cooperation and thus allows her handlers to dress her and direct her as they like, knowing they will manipulate her image in order that they all achieve their mutual goals, which for Katniss only extends as far as deposing Snow and abolishing the Hunger Games since she has no desire to be a part of the government which would emerge after the coup. Even so, despite having no political aspirations, she still defies and challenges the Rebellion leaders at every turn—first by insisting on choosing her own allies for the Quarter Quell; secondly by demanding that her prep team be treated as legal citizens of District Thirteen rather than as prisoners; thirdly by negotiating the terms for the rescue of her fellow Tributes and allies being held by the Capitol and insisting on full amnesty for all of them;

and finally, by demanding that she be given the duty of killing Snow when the time arrives.

For Katniss, each of these demands is non-negotiable, as her stake in this revolution is not about her own power, but it is instead about creating a world where people are valued over material wealth and personal power and ambition. Her stubborn insistence serves as a steadfast reminder of what is truly at stake in the revolution, even as it becomes increasingly apparent that President Coin is more concerned with securing her own absolute authority over Panem, and like Snow, she is willing to sacrifice innocent lives to achieve her goal. Katniss's fear that Coin would prefer a martyred Mockingjay is ultimately confirmed for her by Boggs, and this knowledge encourages her defiance of Coin and the rigid laws of District Thirteen. Pushed to stay one step ahead of her handlers, Katniss is less one of Chowdhury's doomed sacrifices and more of a savvy player in her own right—a player who is willing to play the Game as a pawn to the end, biding her time until she can turn the tables and checkmate her opponent in swift, exacting moves. In the end, when Coin attempts to exploit Katniss's status as the Mockingjay and make her into a martyr both in order to secure the triumph of the resistance as well as to eliminate a threat to her own personal authority, Katniss is prepared for the betrayal and makes her own final move, emphatically refusing to be a sacrifice in Coin's quest for power.

In realizing both her role and worth to Coin, Katniss exposes the primary danger for any of the epic child heroes—their lives are not their own. As children of fate and prophecy, symbols of revolutions, they are community property unless they can find

some way to fulfill their destinies while maintaining their sense of autonomy, even as their adult allies and enemies both conspire to control them. It is, therefore, because of her self-awareness, that out of all of the examples of this epic child heroes to be found in recent children's literature, that in Katniss, the archetype is finally fully realized in purpose, for not only does Katniss serve as the catalyst and figurehead of a revolution, her story comes full circle in a way that her predecessors' stories do not, as she alone *recognizes* that (a) she is merely a figurehead for a cause, and (b) that while it is her life which is simultaneously the most valued and the most endangered, she is ultimately nothing more than a political pawn in the war games of adults. When the war *is* finally over and Katniss has fired the final shot, she is sent back to her devastated homeland—alone and scarred, just another citizen struggling to put a life back together in the aftermath of a revolution.

Ender and Katniss, American versions of the epic child heroes, are somewhat divergent from their global peers. In British and Japanese works, the stories of the epic child heroes tend to reach positive (if not always satisfying) conclusions: Frodo goes into the West to live forever in peace; the Pevensies siblings die in their world but move permanently to Narnia; Harry lives a quiet and peaceful life with Ginny and their children; Naruto marries the girl who has always loved him and becomes both a father and a respected leader of his people, who are finally at peace with one another; Lyra has a sad parting with Will but is left with hope for her future all the same, and Ichigo defeats his enemies and retires to the human world to marry Orihime and raise a family.

The American epic child heroes, however, are granted no such peace. In her discussion of the Child Messiah in contemporary children's and young adult literature, Chowdhury explains that "In essence, Ender and his fellows in *Ender's Game* are cannon fodder—their genius is wrung out of them and they are cast off. Ender is made responsible for the creation of a new world but not permitted to stay in the world he has saved. These children are not people, but instruments" (110). This same statement can be made of Katniss, who is exiled to District Twelve following the events of the Revolution. This statement does not aptly apply to epic child heroes outside of their American incarnations, as Harry, Lyra, Naruto, and Ichigo are not exiled or shunned; while they do each function to some extent as tools, they are also allowed to remain in their communities and participate in social, political, and other important activities. Both Ender and Katniss are unable to reintegrate into their societies, however; the moment they complete their respective missions, they are expected to stand aside and allow the adults to reclaim the positions of power, sacrificing their agency gained as heroes and warriors and once again relegated to the position of powerless children who must be seen rarely and never heard. Ender and Katniss, however, are not content or able to revert back to being children, and when they are left with no direction or mission and are essentially cast aside by the adults who once relied so heavily upon them, neither is willing to retire quietly, and the adults who ruthlessly groomed them into perfect weapons learn that once a weapon is fired, the outcome is, at best, unpredictable. In exercising their autonomy, by making their own statements about the futures of their worlds, Ender and Katniss both commit treason against their leaders, and it is their treasons that are arguably their most

adamantly American statements of heroism, both boldly declaring that they will make their own decisions and stand against any value which they perceive unjust and against anyone whom they perceive to be unfit to lead.

Another unique quality of the American epic child heroes is the mental price they pay for their service as they struggle with post-traumatic stress and depression. Despite the fact that Tolkien's prototype of the epic child hero, Frodo Baggins, likely suffered from crippling Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Livingston 78), most of the epic child heroes who follow him are spared that fate. This is not true of Ender, however. In the successive novels to *Ender's Game*, it is revealed that Ender is devastated by the fact that he has committed xenocide and that he is consequently unable to maintain normal human relationships. He is driven to make reprisal for his actions when he learns there is a way for him to bring life back to the Formics and does so, despite the fact that this could be regarded as an unforgivable betrayal by his own people. Katniss is also deeply disturbed by her ordeal and the things she does to survive, including her assassination of Coin, and takes personal responsibility for each of the dead tributes as well as all who died in the Revolution, whether they fought in her name or not. While the rest of Panem moves forward, she retreats into her past, returning to her home in District Twelve and trying to find some semblance of happiness with Peeta even though she is haunted by the memories of the revolution. Though she eventually feels safe enough to consent to having children, she realizes that she cannot escape the horrors of past as she watches those children play on top of a mass grave holding the bodies of her deceased friends and neighbors. Ender and Katniss each play their roles for their adult handlers until they

complete their duties, and then, when these children who are no longer children attempt to exert some of their own agency and make those final bold moves of their own, they are punished for acting independently and further isolated from their societies, thus supporting Chowdhury's argument that Child Messiahs are often, if not always, merely tools for the adults around them.

Perhaps some of the differences found in the endings of the American stories can be explained by the fact that the epic child heroes of England and Japan did not appear until after fifty years of national reflection and contemplation. However, the American epic child hero Ender was somewhat inspired by and created shortly after the Vietnam War (Card "FAQ" pars. 2-3), arguably the first war in which, thanks to television, modern American civilians are actually able to witness and thus experience vicariously the horrors of battle. Also, Katniss is given life in the aftermath of 9/11, when the grief of the bombings was still somewhat fresh and the culture in flux, and her depression and angst demonstrate how new a national sorrow is to us in America, just as the somber peace and acceptance of her British and Japanese counterparts demonstrates what a difference fifty years can make.

In many ways, Ender and Katniss are children of the post-Vietnam and post-9/11 eras: while Britain and Japan have lived in relative peace since WWII, America has not, and thus there are countless American veterans coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Many of these veterans were either drafted or enlisted into service when they were little more than children themselves and then were thrust into the savage violence of battle and forged into soldiers by the brutality of war. It can be assumed, then, that both

Ender and Katniss could parallel these veterans who suffer from PTSD and find themselves unable to reintegrate into normal society after serving in combat, their minds too traumatized by the violence they have experienced to adjust to civilian life. In her discussion of the role of the child soldier in children's literature, Sarah Outterson Murphy asserts that "Both narratives closely mirror the pattern by which real-life child soldiers are created: the child is emotionally isolated and subjected to violence that is closely linked to forcing the child into committing acts of violence against others" (par. 7). Like so many veterans who return home and struggle to reintegrate into civilian life, Ender and Katniss are left alone to cope with their grief, and some of that is their newfound knowledge of themselves and their own capability to commit acts of violence, and that the parts of themselves that are uniquely their own—Ender's intelligence and gift for strategy and Katniss's raw emotion and love for her sister—are weapons in and of themselves. Murphy explains that "[p]art of Ender's traumatic discovery at the end of the novel is the revelation that his capacity for loving and understanding others is what made him such a brilliant strategist" (par. 14), and that "Katniss, again like Ender, experiences wracking episodes of grief, regret, and self-doubt concerning her role in the violence swirling around her" (par. 5). Murphy concludes with the explanation that

just as Ender's empathy is a cause of his power as well as his suffering, Katniss's love and emotion become a source of power that cannot be artificially created or imitated, as the rebels discover when they try in vain to script her propaganda speech. Instead, Katniss has the most emotional impact—the most power—when she is left to do her own thing. (par. 15)

These gifts of empathy, passion, and love should be qualities that help Ender and Katniss navigate their worlds and interact with other people, but instead they are excavated and exploited by their adult handlers to achieve greater martial and political goals. In the end, after those goals are reached, Ender and Katniss are abandoned, left alone to process what has happened to them and what they have done, unable to trust even their most intimate, innermost selves, for even as they are horrified by their capacity for destruction, they each understand that what they have done has served a greater purpose, though that knowledge is of no true comfort to either of them.

The world around them, no longer having a need for them, also no longer has any interest in their well-being. The leaders of their worlds also have a vested interest in keeping them in exile as well. As Christine Doyle contends in her discussion of Ender and his understudy, Bean, “It is deemed too dangerous for Ender, the most talented military commander ever, to return to earth, since the various entities vying for dominance would certainly do anything to obtain his services, or have him killed so that no one would be able to use his talents” (315). This sentiment is applicable to Katniss as well; Coin recognizes Katniss's potential threat to her power long before Katniss even arrives in District Thirteen. Coin, like Snow, understands that Katniss is politically unpredictable and driven solely by her need to protect those whom she loves; she also understands that the people of Panem, so long denied the ability to protect their own children, admire and respect Katniss for her defiance and her desire do what they cannot. Most importantly, Coin understands and that Katniss's influence could sway the people to reject Coin's leadership should Katniss deem her an unworthy ruler. It is for this reason

that Coin lays the trap for Katniss and uses Prim as bait; the only thing predictable about Katniss is that she will always try to protect her sister. Once the trap is set, Katniss has no choice but to trigger it, and Coin knows that any possible outcomes will likely work in her favor: if Katniss were to be killed, a martyr would be born; if Katniss were to live, then her anger would be directed at the Capitol. Coin assumes no one in her command would reveal that she is the one responsible for the likely death of Prim or that Katniss will realize what has happened on her own, and that if she ever does, that Coin will have already won the people's favor on her own, thus diminishing Katniss's influence over them. Thus, she does not count on Boggs warning Katniss that Coin may not have her best interests at heart, and she certainly does not anticipate Katniss encountering the imprisoned Snow or his revealing to her that it is not he who killed her sister, and it is these oversights which proves to be her own undoing.

It seems then, that in both Ender's and Katniss's cases, the leaders of their worlds have no compunction about using the children to achieve their own goals and then casting them aside once those goals come to fruition, in their triumph forgetting that Ender and Katniss are not normal children and leaving themselves unguarded against inevitable betrayal. They do not consider that their chosen children will exact a price for their services; after all, their causes are for the good of all, so the child heroes should be honored to play their roles. The irony lies in the fact that the cost the will be paid is not awarded to either of the heroes but is instead a victory for their enemies. When Ender decides to restore the Formics, he realizes that "Only me. . . . They found me through the ansible, followed it and dwelt in my mind. In the agony of my tortured dreams they came

to me, even as I spent my days destroying them; they found my fear of them, and found also that I had no knowledge I was killing them. . . . I am the only one they know" (*Ender's Game* 320-21). He vows to the Formic queen that he will find a world where they could be reborn, and he vows to tell their story to his own people and to encourage peace between them (321). In the end, he resolves himself to being a disciple of sorts, anonymously publishing the story of the Formic queen, creating a new religion amongst his people (323), quietly undoing the work of the leaders who had labored so long to turn him into a weapon. In another meeting between enemies, Snow reveals to Katniss that he had nothing to do with her sister's death, reminding her that they "had agreed not to lie to each other" (*Mockingjay* 358) after explaining that Coin had made the final, calculated move to secure her power after the war was essentially over. With that knowledge, Katniss understands that she will never be free of the Capitol, no matter what form it takes.

After she executes Coin, Katniss determines to commit suicide, a desire that strengthens during the time she is imprisoned for the assassination. "And then a terrible thought hits me: What if they're not going to kill me? What if they have more plans for me? A new way to remake, train, and use me? I won't do it. . . . I no longer feel any allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despite being one myself" (377). She, like Ender, is sickened by what she has seen and done, and she believes only her own death will free her from the role of the Mockingjay. In the end, Ender and Katniss both choose to satisfy their own desires: Ender seeks to atone for his crimes against the Formics, and Katniss seeks justice for Prim, who in some way, represents the lost

childhood of all of the Tributes sacrificed on the altar of political ambition. Both of them make the statement to their leaders that their services have a price; if they must sacrifice themselves for the cause of righteousness, then they will have some say in how the future of their worlds unfolds. Their British and Japanese counterparts settle back into their lives, looking forward to a more hopeful future, but Ender and Katniss carry the past with them, their defiantly final acts of war effectively severing them from the new worlds which they helped to create.

There is another intrinsic difference in the way that the epic child heroes of Britain and Japan are treated as opposed to the way their American counterparts are. In *Harry Potter*, *His Dark Materials*, *Naruto*, and *Bleach*, the heroes are at some point made aware that they are necessary on their respective battlefields. Even though they are in some ways shielded by others, they are always different, always special, and always Other. Ender and Katniss, however, are not. From the beginning of both of their stories, they are made to think of themselves as only one of a group of potential candidates. Ender is a student competing with other students and does not have any idea what his intended purpose is to be; Katniss is just one of many Tributes who might be a potential mascot for the rebellion, and until she fires her arrow at the end of *Catching Fire*, there is even some dissension amongst the rebels as to whether Peeta or she would be a more suitable choice for that position. Both Ender and Katniss are selected via a gaming process, Ender by Graff and Katniss by Plutarch, their potential observed and their skills and choices carefully monitored as they progress through their training and encounters. They are not heroes because of their birthright, or because of a true prophecy, or because

of any gifts or talents bestowed upon them by an outside entity; they are heroes because external forces willed that the heroes needed for their respective causes were to be children. Neither is the sole choice for the position of the hero in their respective stories, and yet each is the only "right" choice for that position. As Voldemort arbitrarily made a decision between Harry and Neville, so must Graff and the Rebels choose between students and Tributes. However, unlike the choice made by Voldemort, the choices made on behalf of Ender and Katniss do not come with prophetic assurances; their success is not guaranteed solely because they are chosen. Bean and Peeta, for example, could fulfill their respective roles with ease, and most likely with the same outcomes, yet neither of them would be as an exciting or controversial choice as Ender and Katniss ultimately prove to be.

The fact that Ender and Katniss must earn their position as heroes is well in keeping with the ideal of meritocracy, an ideal which is fundamental to the traditional American value system that treasures the fantasy of the common person becoming successful via hard work and determination (Cooper par. 1). Both Ender and Katniss are essentially chosen based on outside criteria: Ender's parents produced two intelligent and remarkable children before him, though neither of them is suited for the role of the hero, and his very existence is owed to the government allowing his parents to have a Third in hopes that the child will be an acceptable candidate. Katniss is also not the first in her family to have the opportunity to participate in the Hunger Games (which was, at that point, serving the dual purpose of oppressing the Districts as well as auditioning candidates for the Rebellion's mascot); she volunteers to take her sister's place, marking

her at once as an unusual Tribute as such a thing was not usual in the outlying Districts. Ender undergoes years of observation, well beyond the length of time other children his age are monitored, but it is not until he demonstrates his ability to foresee that the best way to avoid being bullied is to eliminate his bully, Stilson, and then proceeds to do so, beating him so badly that Stilson dies from his injuries, that Graff is convinced of Ender's potential as a strategist. Even though Ender's solutions to problems appear to be extreme to other people, including Graff's military colleagues, once Graff has seen the evidence that Ender has the potential to devise long-term strategies, he allows Ender to enter the command school so that he can immediately begin training and testing his abilities. However, even though he is clearly the best candidate in the history of the school, the administration continues to recruit other children, including an understudy for Ender himself, should Ender fail and a replacement is necessary. Katniss, even after volunteering, must still undergo preparations of her own: she is groomed, styled, and paraded before the citizens of Panem, participating in training exercises in which Tributes are taught basic survival skills and allowed to practice and strengthen any offensive or defensive skills they already possess before being scored and ranked. The citizens of the Capitol are allowed and encouraged to make a sport of the Games by placing odds on their favored Tributes or by sending them favors to help them win, and so Katniss and the other Tributes are on display for both the loyal citizens of Panem who merely seek an exciting and worthy champion for the Games as well as for the rebels who seek a different sort of champion altogether. From the moment she volunteers to take her sister's place, therefore, Katniss is watched and studied by those rebels. Her mentor, Cinna,

deliberately styles her to attract their attention, thrusting her into the middle of a political battle she does not fully understand. As the story progresses, she must continually prove her worth to the rebellion as President Coin prefers the more charismatic and acquiescent Peeta and sees Katniss as untrustworthy, and ultimately, expendable. Unlike their British and Japanese counterparts, neither Ender or Katniss, therefore, is ultimately viewed as necessary to the cause he or she represents; while they each have a handful of loyal followers, they each also have detractors who would replace them with another candidate with the slightest provocation.

The epic child heroes in America, then, walk a tenuous line. They are expected to be champions who are capable of killing others in the line of duty to the point of committing genocide as in Ender's story or of making a final, horrible choice to send other children to their deaths as Katniss is expected to do when the leaders of the rebellion propose a final Hunger Games with the Capitol's children. The American epic child heroes are expected to follow the lead of their adult handlers, regardless of their own ethics or morals, and sometimes even despite their own desires. They are also supposed to calmly and quietly step aside when they have served their purposes, allowing their adult handlers to step in and resume control of their worlds without expecting to be awarded any power of their own or even to be given autonomy. The adult leaders have no qualms about using the child heroes to fight their battles or win their support, but they also have no intention of allowing those children to use their heroic status in any way which might diminish their own power or influence. Where Harry and Lyra grow up to be productive members of their societies, Naruto becomes a leader in his world, and Ichigo

settles down to raise a family, Ender and Katniss are exiled, sent to the farthest reaches of their worlds, and silenced.

Given that Ender and Katniss are both children, it is unsettling to consider that they are so used by the adults in their stories. Not only are they called to be heroes in combat, they also serve as inspirations and figureheads of their respective factions. Just as Prim and Rue serve to motivate Katniss to act, Ender and Katniss serve to stir the civilians in the government and the general populations of their worlds into action. They represent the smallest and most helpless citizens, yet their own childhoods are ruthlessly and unapologetically sacrificed in order to make them into those iconic heroic figures. Unlike Rue and Prim whose innocence is shattered by outside influences, thus driving Katniss to action, Ender's and Katniss's innocence is stolen from them by the people who are supposed to be protecting and fighting for them as children of their worlds in order to motivate other adults to support and follow them. Graff is allowed to do as he pleases to turn Ender into a military leader, even allowing Ender to (accidentally) kill another student, not once, but two times (Stilson and Bonzo), simply to make certain that Ender understands that he will never receive help from outside sources. In Katniss's case, it is no secret amongst the Resistance's cabinet and top advisors that Coin deliberately attempts to make a martyr of the Mockingjay for her own political gain, and in doing so, she arranges the murders of innocent medics and children. However, Boggs, Haymitch, Plutarch, and others who know Coin to be corrupt still do not openly defy her, instead allowing Katniss to serve as their tool in the end. The willingness of the adults in both stories in allowing the child heroes to be sacrificed on the altars of their respective causes

while offering only tacit or feeble protests speaks to reinforce the idea that even within the context of their own stories, the American epic child heroes are expendable figureheads as opposed to being the actual heroes self-motivated by goodness and propelled by prophecy as found in other incarnations of the archetype. It is only their final acts of defiance against their own allies and handlers that allow Ender and Katniss to be heroes in the same manner as that of their literary peers as they seize control of their narratives and act according to their own consciences, declaring boldly with their actions that they are no longer pawns and are not content to be silent figureheads.

CHAPTER SIX: THE EPIC CHILD HERO IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The effects of war and trauma on the human psyche are far-reaching and widely varied, but many of the effects have been, throughout history, chronicled by the arts. Works of art, whether musical, visual, or textual, that are created during times of conflict generally express a wide range of reactions and emotions related to that conflict. And, like a stone tossed into a pool of still water, those rippling effects of conflict on artistic expression continue for years, and perhaps generations, into the future, as evidenced by the development and evolution of the epic child hero archetype. This effect is deeply psychological in nature, and is perhaps best considered from a Jungian perspective.

Mary Anne Mattoon, in her analysis of Jungian psychology, asks, "Do we know how many archetypes there are? The question may not be meaningful because archetypes are patterns and processes rather than entities" (41). This suggests that archetypes are created for a specific cultural purpose; they are not merely nebulous figures which were once imposed upon characters in stories, but instead, they were born in times of need in response to that need. Mattoon responds to her own question by suggesting two possibilities: "Nevertheless, Jung offered at least two answers: (a) There is only one archetype, the collective unconscious, which is the producer of all archetypal images, and (b) there is an unlimited number of archetypes, as many as the typical situations in life" (41). I contend that the answer is the latter rather than the former and that the epic child hero is evidence of that.

While war and trauma have always been part of the human world, something happened in the twentieth century that created a universal need for a new archetypal hero

to be created. It is my belief that that "something" was the profound increase in technological discoveries and advances that allowed for the inventions of more efficient weapons as well as for the new possibility of rapid global communication. For the first time in history, via film and radio, people who were not living in high-conflict areas were able to see and hear what was happening in war zones that were possibly on the other side of the world from them, which allowed them to feel more personally invested in those events. Now, in the twenty-first century, not only is it possible to hear live reports and to see video images of conflicts that have already occurred, it is possible to witness events unfolding in "real" time. Never has our world seemed so large and so small at once, and never has there seemed to be a greater need for a hero. That the epic child hero is a new archetypal hero is certain, and after closely examining the primary texts which feature these heroes, it becomes clear that the growing fear of unrestrained warfare and of nations with access to powerful weapons of mass destruction has made manifest an intrinsic human need to believe that children and adolescents are capable of fighting the battles that adults cannot fight, and that it is only through these children that the world may ultimately be made safe.

For several centuries prior to the twentieth, England was a recognized world superpower. Through the years, as England became Great Britain, and then the United Kingdom, with colonies around the world, the British Empire was a force to be reckoned with and seemed unshakeable. On the other side of the world, another island nation, Japan, began expanding its empire in the late nineteenth century, and less than one hundred years later, was well on its way to becoming a military superpower in its own

right. In comparison, at the time of World War II, the relatively young nation of the United States of America was still recovering from a devastating depression and working to secure its own borders, opting to grow by inviting people in rather than by expanding further outside of its natural boundaries to the east and west and its well-established (by that point) political boundaries to the north and south. While the war helped bring an end to the expansive British and Japanese Empires, it offered the USA an opportunity to acquire strategic holdings in the Pacific Ocean and to establish itself as a legitimate world superpower. The changing circumstances of these nations as a result of the second world war also contributed to the development of the epic child hero archetype.

From its earliest inception in the fantasy writings of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, the epic child hero has been a child born of war and trauma. However, it is not likely that either author realized what he was bringing to life. Mircea Eliade, in his discussion of symbols, notes that "The fact is that in most cases an author does not understand all the meaning of his work. Archaic symbolisms reappear spontaneously . . ." (25). While Tolkien and Lewis each had specific intentions for their characters, the characters themselves were representative of something new and wholly their own as well. In his discussion of fantasy characters, Brian Attebery asks, "What is the source of these archetypal characters? Do they arise from introspection and self-analysis? Are they intensely private symbolic systems, each encoding a unique psychic balance? Obviously not" (71). His answers to his own questions are intriguing:

Fantasy learned this conception of character from fairy tales and myths, which are by definition public property. Anonymous, traditional, their origins lost in pre-

literate prehistory, magical fairy tales would seem to express the identity of the group, not the individual. (71)

This idea of characters belonging to the collective supports the theory of a "collective unconscious," which, as Carl Jung states, "is not individual but common to all men, . . . and is the true basis of the individual psyche" (*Collected Works: Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* 151). Mattoon contends that "[t]he idea of the collective unconscious did not originate with Jung. It had been present for a long time in philosophical, literary, and even psychological works as well as those of religious history" (34), but even that suggests that there is indeed a universal consciousness of some sort that informs how humans respond to and interact with events. As World War II was the first event in human history to be performed on a global stage to a global audience, it is no wonder that writers would tap into a universal sentiment and give it new life.

Fifty years later, when Philip Pullman wrote about the wild little liar, Lyra, he was responding to the religious fantasies of John Milton and C.S. Lewis, and in doing so, tapped into that same collective unconscious. With five decades between Lyra and Lucy, Pullman had sufficient time to study the second world war and to observe the cultural shifts that occurred in its aftermath, and his young heroine is a product of the post-war world. For all of her flaws, chief among which would be her rebellious nature and lying tongue, Lyra has a concept of morality, which she believes must be upheld. However, "[a]lthough Lyra begins her quest believing, childlike, in moral clarity, she quickly learns that many adults do not obey the rules" (C. Walsh 249). Lyra, whose talent in telling untruths had always been frowned upon by her guardians, suddenly finds herself in a

world filled with lies when she had once believed that it was only she who was in the wrong.

This reflects the post-war postmodernism movement's ideologies that saw a growing sense of unrest and societal disillusionment with the status quo; Lyra, like many humans, created a moral standard in her own mind and stayed just close enough to it that she could believe herself to be mostly good but for one small habit. When she realized that that was also a lie that she told herself, she was faced with the reality of having to question everything. After the war, when the world had time to sit down and take inventory of what had happened, they began learning the same thing. Truths that had always been taken for granted were being exposed as lies and were often found wanting as politicians and religious leaders and institutions were falling under scrutiny, their authority challenged by new ideas taking root, and even the liars, like Lyra, realized that the golden standard by which they once measured their own morality was not necessarily "real." It is not until Lyra understands the insidiousness of dishonesty when in the land of the dead, however, that she is convicted of her own lies, realizing at once that awakening to the truth that the world around her was corrupt was only the first step, and that she herself must exchange lies for the truth in order to be truly moral. Once she has realized the truth and embraced her new reality, Lyra returns to Oxford with a new perspective on herself and a new awareness of the adult world around her that enables her to begin her new life as a scholar who will ostensibly set about reshaping the world according to her own new understanding.

J.K. Rowling also taps into the collective unconscious of the post-war world when she created Harry Potter, although Harry's awakening to the truth is a happier circumstance. As an outcast child who had never felt loved or wanted, when he discovers his world was full of lies, he embraces his new reality and the freedom he obtains. For the first time in his life, he is able to escape the Dursleys, his abusive guardians, and embrace his true identity as a wizard. This is reflective of the increasing cultural interest in finding and creating one's own chosen family or identity. The Harry Potter series itself has a cult following of devoted fans who identify with the characters and seek to participate in immersive experiences that make them feel closer to their "fandom." As Dustin Kidd claims, "The release of the latest HP novel may not spark a revolution . . . but it is an important element of social cohesion. It unites the community in the pursuit of a common goal—Potter" (85).

This sort of neo-tribalism involves a good bit of rebuilding the world itself, and in the twenty or so years since Harry Potter was introduced to the world, we have only seen more of this social and cultural restructuring as people call for a greater acceptance of diversity in all aspects of life. These ideals are also present in the Harry Potter series (and perhaps it could be argued that the series helped shaped the cultural trend), but at its core, Harry Potter himself is much more at peace with the status quo. Once he has defeated Voldemort, Harry does not continue to participate in revolutionary activities. This is partly because this is a shared fate amongst most epic child heroes, but it is also because he is content with the status quo. His quest is to remove an outside threat to his world, a threat that would destroy the status quo and recreate it in its own image. Harry recognized

that Voldemort would not only impose violence upon both the wizarding and the muggle world, he would encourage and allow others, like Dolores Umbridge, to rise in power. For Harry, establishing an individual sense of morality as Lyra does would not mean intellectual freedom; for him, it would instead mean that those who had long been restrained by the generally accepted cultural standards would be granted the power to remake the world in their image, not that he would be able to contribute to a new social order himself.

The British epic child heroes, then, represent polar opposite views when it comes to the purpose of their quests. Lyra's mission, ultimately, is to break down and destroy the order of her own world as well as to reset the order of every other world. This is not done from selfishness, as the implications are that she is overturning the old regime, represented by what readers will recognize to be the Judeo-Christian God, whom Pullman portrays as being selfish and controlling. Lyra is seen as the savior of worlds because she ushers in a new age of enlightenment and thus allows all beings in every world the opportunity to think and reason for themselves rather than being subject to the control of another. Harry's mission, on the other hand, is to protect the order of his world by eliminating a threat from without. Voldemort represents the selfish pursuit of knowledge and power, and his world would be one where the freedoms of others would be constrained and abused. Both Harry and Lyra are committed to the truth, however, and to creating a better world for the future, and that ultimately means that they both find themselves coming full circle and returning to a life similar to the one they once knew:

Lyra to her Oxford, this time as a devoted scholar, and Harry to a home and family, this time as a husband and father who loves and is loved in return.

The epic child hero came about a bit differently in Japan. Instead of tapping into a universal cultural shift in moral values and cultural interests, the Japanese epic child hero emerged as a response to the question of political identity. As noted in Chapter Four, Japan struggled with coming to terms with the events surrounding World War II and its dual identity as both aggressor and victim. The post-war years were filled with arguments about what would come next as the nation was forced to struggle with a national identity crisis, which Sebastian Conrad and Alan Nothnagle detail in their discussion of how Japanese critics and scholars debated over which direction Japan should take in the wake of their defeat. According to Conrad and Nothnagle, some of the most outspoken voices in the post-war debates were those of Marxists, who "linked their criticism with hopes for profound reforms of Japanese society. For this reason, the end of the war signaled not only an ending but also a liberation and the possibility of a new beginning"(86); he also contends that according to those same Marxists, "the nation was regularly depicted as a helpless victim of a militaristic oligarchy" (98). This is also noted by Adrian Pinnington, who explores the role of shame in post-war Japan and remarks that there is a "the widely noted tendency for Japanese to see themselves as victims rather than perpetrators of the war" (96). His contention, combined with Conrad's discussion of post-war Marxist theory, seems to indicate that even modern Japan still struggles with coming to terms with what happened before, during, and after the war, which is what continues to make it

a compelling subject. Matthew Penney, in his study of the popular "war fantasy" genre of literature in Japan notes that

At a time when concerns about the state of history education in Japanese schools and what is described as the nation's 'historical amnesia' regarding war crimes are at a high, the content of the war fantasy genre and the representation of the past in Japanese popular culture seem more important than ever. (36)

Conrad's work supports this contention of Penney's, as it is his belief that recently, "textbooks in Japan developed into a battleground in the debate over the correct interpretation of the past" (117). Michael Gibbs supports this idea as well, stating that "By about 1990, . . . The postwar era itself, not the various wars of the twentieth century or the economic performance of individual countries, became the central concern" (xii).

All of these debates created the perfect context for the birth of the epic child hero in Japan. In her discussion of the function of manga in Japanese culture, Maria Rankin-Brown and Morris Brown, Jr. claim, "Manga is a necessary means of escape for many who are uncomfortable in the world they inhabit. This leads to manga and anime after showing the world as it used to be or as it could be from a utopic or dystopic perspective" (83). They also address *Naruto*, stating that the series "express[es] this theme of trying to find one's true identity through different quests and adventures" (84). Brown's contention suggests that the character Naruto, like Japan, is struggling with an identity crisis that must be worked out in order to achieve any sort of true peace. This same argument could be made for *Bleach*, especially when considering Mattoon's discussion of the *persona* and Ichigo's multiple identities: "No one wears the same mask on all occasions. The persona

is made up of many masks, each of which is assumed as the appropriate response to a specific environment and set of conditions. Often a particular mask corresponds to a certain status" (28). Once they have mastered their inner demons, it is time for Ichigo and Naruto, like Japan, to find a way to make peace with their multiple identities, both positive and negative, in order to move forward in a new world.

Thus, the Japanese epic child hero is one that speaks both to the universal human need for an established identity as well as to the need for stability within that identity. Both Naruto and Ichigo undertake quests that, like Harry Potter's, progress in a circular manner; that is to say, they repeat the process multiple times as they pursue the end goal of an overarching quest. Each cycle of their quests involves unlocking more of their identity as well as in mastering more of their inner demons. Furthermore, it speaks to the idea of self-improvement, suggesting that the path to peace involves learning from one's weaknesses and mistakes, just as Japan was learning how to rebuild itself and its national psyche after the war, even though it sometimes appeared that the battle for those things would be lost.

To illustrate this more clearly, at one point early in *Naruto*, Naruto's village undergoes a sneak attack. The battle is long and fierce, and in the end, it pits Naruto against Gaara of the Sand, who is the *jinchūriki* of the One-Tail, Shukaku. Gaara, unlike Naruto, has been trained to use his *bijū* as a weapon, and he has been used as his village's assassin for some time. Like Naruto, Gaara is treated with contempt and fear by his village, and he has become angry and bitter himself. Naruto, despite still not being completely accepted by his peers, has refused to give in to their perception and become

what they believe him to be, but Gaara has long since lost that battle. After all others have fallen, and Gaara and Naruto face each other, it is apparent that Naruto is outmatched, though he is able to wound Gaara before he falls. During the battle, Gaara attacks him repeatedly, until finally, Naruto lies broken on the ground, unable to move his arms or legs. Gaara asks him why he persists, and Naruto proceeds to drag himself across the ground by his *chin* in order to launch a final attack, explaining that he must protect the people he loves, and he manages to defeat Gaara. At this point, Naruto is weak and undisciplined, but this battle strengthens him and builds his resolve to become stronger, so that in the end, when he faces Kaguya and the Ten-Tails, he has worked through all of his weaknesses, but long before that, he experiences a sweeter sort of victory when he next meets Gaara after their brutal battle, only this time, they meet as friends.

In America, the epic child hero evolved under somewhat different circumstances, as has been discussed in previous chapters. Unlike the epic child heroes of Britain and Japan, the American epic child hero does not seem to have emerged from any sort of human desire or need to work through moral, political, cultural, or personal ideologies. Instead, even in *Ender*, the earliest iteration of the American epic child hero, there seems to be a more cynical purpose at work. The American epic child heroes are at once both innocent and weary of the world. they understand the way the game is played—which is perhaps unsurprising, given that the series featuring the two most prominent examples of the American epic child hero are *Ender's Game* and *The Hunger Games*. The Vietnam War, which inspired the *Ender* series, and 9/11, which set the stage for *The Hunger*

Games, were both noted moments of awakening for the American people, but they only evoked outrage, and from one generation to the next, Americans went from calling for the end of a war to demanding another one begin. Ender and Katniss are reflections of disillusionment and rage, and they not only serve as heroes but as cautionary tales to the adage that "no good deed goes unpunished."

Perhaps one of the most problematic issues in the American epic child hero narrative is one that is common to children's and young adult literature in general, and that is the role of the child is prescribed by adults, not the actual child. This issues has resulted in much general discussion by children's and young adult literature scholars such as Perry Nodelman, Jacqueline Rose, and Peter Hunt, but it is also addressed in more specific ways by scholars focusing on specific issues in specific texts. One of the most glaring instances of this sort of imbalance between the good of the child and the will of the adult is the one that exists in the stories of epic child heroes. According to Radhiah Chowdhury,

Something has changed, however, in the representation of the Child Messiah in recent children's fantasy. Far from the glorious fate of a Chosen One, there is now no future as utterly bleak in contemporary children's fantasy to be 'fated' as the next Child Messiah. (110)

This is certainly true of Ender and Katniss, who find themselves casually tossed aside when they have served their purposes. Both are exiled from society out of fear they will be adopted as political beacons for potential future enemies of the very people they just fought to protect and serve, but neither hero has a voice in his or her own fate. There is

almost a sense of a case of cultural Munchausen by Proxy, in which adults play the afflicted adult and the child hero plays the victim: the child cast as a revolutionary figurehead evokes sympathy and anger in adults, allowing them to feel passion in a way that they would not otherwise feel and inspires them to action. This also begs the question of the role of the adult readers and the adult authors of these books as to what we expect from these heroes ourselves.

Chowdhury alleges that “Although the adults cannot save their own world, they see their supportive role as crucial—the Child Messiahs ensure that there is a future, but it is the adult world that will construct it” (107). This is true, but there are ways for the epic child heroes to assert their own voices and agency when needed. For example, Ender, disturbed by what he has done, is presented with a choice he never expected to have when the Formics reach out to him and request that he protect their unborn queen and find a place where she might begin regenerating their species. Though it goes against everything Ender has been trained to believe and do in his life, he takes the queen and pledges to give her that opportunity, despite what the consequences may be for himself, or even for his world. Katniss, like Ender, is also given the opportunity to exercise her agency when she chooses to assassinate President Coin rather than President Snow, interjecting her own voice into the discussion of the future when the adults would rather have her silenced.¹ Thus, the American epic child hero is capable of subverting the narrative when necessary and of making it their own.

¹ Ironically, Snow laughs so hard at her decision that he dies while choking on his own blood, so Katniss assures that neither president will have power over her.

What, though, of the epic child hero in general? While American epic child heroes have shown the ability to subvert and overturn the narrative for their own favor, what of the others? These texts establish that though the children are the heroes, it is still not left to them to be in charge of the worlds that they save. The message is that these tasks are better left to others more suited for ruling; once the heroes have fulfilled their purpose and sacrificed themselves to the cause, they are to retire quietly and allow the adults to go about the business of governance. As Drew Chappell claims, "Adults conceive childhood not in terms of living children, but an assumed child, a 'the child,' onto which they ascribe whatever markers are useful to work out their hopes, fears, and ideologies" (283). This is apparent in the epic child heroes, who are fearless, loyal, devoted, and willing to perform, which leads to Maria Nikolajeva's conjecture that the child-centered narrative is something akin to the carnival explored in Bakhtin's *Carnival Inversions* (226). Referencing *Harry Potter*, Nikolajeva contends that,

[Harry's] power is subjected to a set of regulations. . . . The child may have an illusion of unlimited power during carnival, while it is actually restricted by adults. Although empowered, the child is not given full control; and even though it is understood that Harry is the only one to match the evil force of Voldemort, until the ultimate battle Harry has to comply with the rules imposed by adults. (230-1)

This is what makes it easy for Dumbledore to guide Harry along the path of heroism. While Harry is still subject to adult rules and regulations, Dumbledore is able to bend and twist those rules at will in order to assist him along his path. For example, Dumbledore

can overlook certain behaviors in which Harry and his friend engage but hold Draco Malfoy and his friends accountable for them without question. Even as Harry is allowed a measure of autonomy then, it would appear that Dumbledore is still pulling the strings from behind the scenes, then, so to speak.

This leads me to ask a deeper question: why is it that it is culturally acceptable to cast literary children and adolescents as figureheads to adult revolutions, only to toss them aside once their work has been done? The child heroes' own desires notwithstanding—as most of them have no desire for power themselves, especially after seeing the truth of the maxim that “absolute power corrupts absolutely,”—why are they given the responsibility of destroying evil but subsequently left out of the business of governing the new world once present threat is removed? Nikolajeva emphatically asserts that,

[T]he prerequisite of romantic fiction is the return to the initial order, the disempowerment of the hero, and the re-establishment of adult authority. . . .

Within the romantic mode, the child hero is brought back from magical journeys to alternative worlds or histories to the ordinary, sometimes being explicitly stripped of the attributes of previous power. . . . the character stands alone without assistance, no longer a hero. (234)

Ender and Katniss play the game and learn the rules. They learn that the adult world is "Other," and they choose to withdraw from that world. However, Lyra, Harry, Naruto, and Ichigo return to the adult world to become active members of it, even as they maintain the moral superiority of the epic child hero, even if they do not maintain the

position itself. The one thing they cannot do themselves, however, is die. They must all live and participate in the world they helped create, which for some of them may be the worst possible fate. Jennifer Lynn Barnes notes, "Katniss never gets to sacrifice herself. She doesn't get the heroic death. She survives—and that leaves her doing the hardest thing in the world: living in it once so many of the ones that she loves are gone" (27). This is a statement about the nature of the child hero, who is, after all, courageous.

Thus, I believe the answer to the question of acceptability lies in this: these child heroes obviously represent the best of humanity—the ones who stand up and fight for what is good and right and who are unfettered by the chains of adulthood. They do not have to worry about how they will provide for their families when they lose their jobs for making their stand; they do not have to fear social recrimination and ostracism because they are already outsiders and loners who are strong enough to take the abuse. They are innocent enough to believe right will always overcome wrong, and they are pure enough not to use their own power for evil. At the same time, because they are outsiders and loners, unattached to and not responsible for an official family unit; they are somewhat expendable. With no one waiting at home for them, no one needs them to provide; they may wander into danger alone because they *are* alone. Once they serve their purpose, they are also free to disappear or die; it is only necessary for them to step down from their position of influence once they have completed their tasks so that the adults can set about ruling the world once more,² and I believe that this is something most adult readers and authors can accept.

² The one exception to this is Naruto, who becomes the seventh *hokage*, but he does not do so immediately.

It may seem that the parameters for the epic child hero are very limited. This is because, at this point, it is necessary to establish an exact definition of the archetype as it is emerging. With time and consideration, other heroic child characters such as Percy Jackson from Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians series or Will Cooper of Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* series who do not quite fit the strict parameters I have established can be considered and evaluated for inclusion as valid examples as well. There are also possibilities of examining the archetype in terms of other elements as well. For example, I have limited my research to examples of the archetype from three countries that were profoundly affected by the traumatic global event of World War II. However, as epic child heroes are created from war and trauma, there will certainly be examples emerging in the literature of many other nations and cultures as time passes, and with each new instance, the archetype will grow to become a multi-faceted, complex character of its own. Each new iteration will also bring new questions about the author as well as about the culture from which it emerges, opening the doors for further research. Another possible avenue of research is that of how gender might affect the development and evolution of the epic child hero. I have already noticed a distinct difference in the stories of female epic child heroes and male epic child heroes. In the stories with female protagonists, specifically Lyra and Katniss, the goal of the hero is to subvert and overthrow the status quo, whereas in the stories with male protagonists, specifically Harry, Naruto, Ichigo, and Ender, the goal of the hero is to protect and enforce the status quo. I believe this is a significant difference and that further research is warranted.

Ultimately, the possibilities for the evolution of the epic child hero are endless, and thus, so are the possibilities for research and study.

In considering the creation, evolution, and future of the epic child hero, the importance of recognizing and understanding the function of archetypes in literature is essential. As Jung says, "Archetypes are typical modes of apprehension, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of apprehension we are dealing with an archetype, no matter whether its mythological character is recognized or not" (*Structure* 137-8). It is my contention that the epic child hero is a legitimate new archetype, one created by historically unique circumstances made possible by advances in technology in the twentieth century. It is separate from other archetypes such as the Hero, the Shadow, or the Divine Child and has its own history and function. According to Jung,

The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution. . . . [It] is the source of the instinctual forces of the psyche and of the forms and categories that regulate them, namely the archetypes. All the most powerful ideas in history go back to the archetypes. (*Structure* 158)

The epic child hero is an archetype born of a collective unconscious and reflects social, moral, psychological, political, and cultural concerns. It is born from trauma, as is reflected in the stories of the children themselves. Finally, it is a powerful witness to the history of the twentieth century and stands as permanent tribute to what man has wrought.

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