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The Sidekick Comes of Age: Tracing the Growth of Secondary Characters in Young Adult Literature

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THE SIDEKICK COMES OF AGE:
TRACING THE GROWTH OF SECONDARY CHARACTERS
IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Despite their evident usefulness and proliferation, sidekicks have been kicked to the side of literary criticism until recently. Now, thanks to the influence of artifacts like comic books and popular films, the study of sidekicks has begun a resurgence and might finally get the attention it deserves. The influx of multi-dimensional sidekicks has allowed literary history to shift its focus, and has provided a mandate for authors and other creators to promote the sidekick in new and interesting ways. Nevertheless, the literary sidekick has yet to be the subject of a significant critical study. Such a study should, I argue, focus on the cutting edge of the literary sidekick today: young adult literature (YA). YA has embraced the sidekick, recognizing the way the character can reflect for the YA audience the importance of growth and finding one's place in the world.

Because YA utilizes the sidekick in such creative and unusual ways, partnering the two reveals a rich literary synergy: first, readers finding their places in the world relate more easily to the secondary hero than the primary hero. Second, so many sidekicks recognizable in the popular consciousness are male; female heroes tend to be in short supply as well. YA brings literary depth here, as it has consistently and deeply connected with audiences through female heroes and sidekicks. Third, a rising trend in YA novels is to tell a story from the sidekick's perspective, making the sidekick the protagonist. The nature of many YA texts allows the sidekick to grow

beyond his or her literary or historical origins. This need for YA readers to continue their maturation and growth alongside literary counterparts, is supported by considerable YA scholarship: it is clear that as the sidekicks grow, the readers can grow with them. Over the course of this dissertation, I find and illustrate three distinct avenues through which this growth occurs. This dissertation will thus establish sidekick scholarship as a burgeoning field in and of itself, as well as its place within the scope of YA.

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INTRODUCTION

“... we are now under the absolute necessity of devoting to this secondary character in our story rather more space and attention than we originally had intended” – *The Idiot* (Dostoevsky 452).

The importance of the “character” in literary criticism and theory has been regularly assumed since the creation of distinct characters. The importance of the character in literature itself is obvious: where would stories be without the characters that occupy them? However, the meta-attention paid by literary criticism and theory to the nature of character in literature has often been minimal. In the introduction to his study on how literature treats minor characters, *One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, Alex Woloch lists several influential theorists on the paucity of literary studies devoted to character. He cites Jonathan Culler: “Character is the major aspect of the novel to which structuralism has paid least attention and has been least successful in treating” (qtd. in Woloch 14). Another is Seymour Chatman: “It is remarkable how little has been said about the theory of character in literary history and criticism” (qtd. in Woloch 14). Woloch leverages these statements to set up his own argument—that there is a relative “distribution of attention” on major over minor characters within any story’s narrative (15). His approach is to study the “character-system” and “character-space” as it occurs within the novel—a goal that sounds close to structuralism in nature.

While minor characters have failed to receive attention at different times in literary history, there have been times when character studies were given some due consideration, such

as during the vogue of archetypal studies about fifty years ago. Researching the heroic archetype revealed ubiquitous evidence of a hero in wide-ranging cultures, literatures, mythologies, and societies. Anthropologists, mythologists, literary critics, and psychologists alike found a character that sounded and seemed like a universal concept. Another archetypal character that occurs almost as universally as the hero is the sidekick. The sidekick is already present in the first recorded work of world literature, the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh* (25th cent. BC): he is Enkidu, the tamed wild man who accompanies Gilgamesh on his adventures until tragically killed (in good sidekick fashion). The advent of the secondary character in ancient drama was also very early, as Aristotle writes, “the number of actors was first increased to two by Aeschylus, who curtailed the business of the Chorus, and made the dialogue, or spoken portion, take the leading part in the play” (Aristotle 228).

Plato’s crafting of dialogues like the *Phaedrus* around the dialogue of Socrates and the titular, but very secondary Phaedrus show yet another early literary dimension of the sidekick, here in philosophical discourse (Plato 3). Many other ancient examples of “right-hand men,” if you will, include Moses’ Aaron in the Bible and Achilles’ Patrocles in *The Iliad*. Despite their evident usefulness, importance, and proliferation, sidekicks have generally, in one form or another, fallen victim of their names’ sake—being kicked to the side—until the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Now, thanks to the influence (and legitimization) of things like comic books and popular films, the study of sidekicks has begun a resurgence and might finally get the attention it deserves. Fresh in the public zeitgeist are richly-developed sidekicks like Bucky Barnes (*Captain America: The Winter Soldier* [2014]), Mr. Spock (*Star Trek Beyond* [2016]), Chewbacca (*Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens* [2015]), Richard Castle (ABC’s *Castle*

[2009-present]), and countless others. The influx of interesting and multi-dimensional sidekicks like these has allowed cultural and literary history to make a shift in focus, to promote the sidekick in new and interesting ways—a shift which I will explore in this dissertation. Although I see such a shift towards promotion of the sidekick throughout contemporary culture, I believe its truly cutting edge may be found in the field of Young Adult Literature (YA). YA has embraced the sidekick, recognizing the particular power the secondary character can have for adolescent readers in experiencing growth and finding one's place in the world. Consequently, I would argue YA has been, and will continue to be, in the forefront of sidekick character studies.

Regardless of this recent flowering, the literary sidekick has yet to have a significant critical study. Literary sidekicks are typically only recognized when their characterization offers support for a researcher's major focus—gender studies, multicultural studies, or any other approach that questions power-placement in relationships. More often than not, these scholars include the sidekick in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or incidental recognitions—an act that leaves this vein largely un-researched. In light of this practice, a plethora of opportunities exist regarding the sidekick. For example, as sidekicks inherently occupy a “one-down” position, any and all conversations regarding power, oppression, marginalization, and “Othering” come into play. This position also can include discussions of race, identity, gender, and intersubjectivity when understanding how sidekicks have often been used to attract a minority audience, be it racial, cultural, or sexual. Although these opportunities exist, this dissertation intentionally chooses not to pursue them at this time in an effort to first establish a study of sidekicks' narrative position and characterization. The result is a foundation that will better enable specialized research opportunities throughout various academic disciplines. In fact, part of the

natural reaction to this study is to encourage (and in some cases challenge) scholars to take a more focused look at sidekicks through a unique literary lens. As it is nearly impossible, as well as irresponsible, to entirely ignore issues of power or gender, there are moments in this dissertation where these conversations are begun, touched upon, briefly explained, or alluded to. In the interest of maintaining usable parameters in a study that might otherwise become unwieldy, however, I leave deepening these ideas for future consideration and attempt to bring the conversation back to the original focus.

Another choice that keeps the focus of this study narrow is to view the sidekick as he or she appears in YA. Because of how YA has embraced the sidekick, placing it on the cutting edge of literary history, partnering the two not only makes sense, but reveals a rich literary synergy. Firstly, YA readers typically struggling to find their position in the world relate more easily to the secondary hero of a traditional text than the primary hero. Secondly, so many sidekicks recognizable in the popular, public consciousness are male; female heroes tend to be in short supply as well. The opposite is the case in YA, as it has consistently and deeply connected with audiences through female heroes and female sidekicks. Thirdly, a rising trend in YA novels is to tell a story from the sidekick's perspective, making the sidekick the protagonist. This paradoxically allows a sidekick to host the readers' experiences of finding a place in the world while still alongside the "hero," a stereotypically more capable individual.

It is my assertion that the story of growth included in most YA texts, in direct correlation to its core readership, allows the sidekick as a literary entity to "grow" beyond its literary-historical origins. This idea, of the need for YA readers to continue their maturation and growth alongside their literary counterparts, is supported by considerable YA scholarship: it is clear that

as the sidekicks grow, the readers can grow with them. Over the course of this dissertation, I find and illustrate three different and distinct avenues through which this growth occurs in literary sidekicks. I intend this dissertation to help establish sidekick scholarship as a burgeoning field in and of itself, as well as its place within the scope of YA. Additionally, I believe the advanced development of the sidekick in YA demonstrates its creativity and effectiveness in reaching the YA audience.

Note on Terminology

Before proceeding, I freely acknowledge here the dismissal inherent in the term “sidekick.” Other monikers used to describe the friendly deuteragonist include “secondary character,” “supporting character,” or, according to Peter Coogan, “assistant,” “partner,” or “pal” (qtd. in Puente). All these terms, however, imply at least on some level that the sidekick is an afterthought. Even when used as a marketing term—thinking of the vehicle by Suzuki called the Sidekick, the T-Mobile/Samsung cell phone called the Sidekick, or any number of software applications that “help” manage information, actions, or security—there is a connotation of usefulness, but not necessity. The unfairness of such a situation has begun playing itself out in different literary scenarios, to include J. Michael Straczynski’s graphic novel *Sidekick*, a story of a superhero sidekick driven insane by his inability to escape the shadow of his once-great, now-thought-deceased hero. Over the course of this dissertation—except when quoting other scholars—I have chosen to eschew the use of “supporting character,” “assistant,” “partner” and “pal,” as I feel all fall short of the importance of the character they describe. I use “sidekick,” “secondary character,” and sometimes “secondary hero” interchangeably for ease of use and to stave off repetitiveness. I do so with some reservations, however, as the terms still may sound

dismissive. It is not my intention to continue relegating sidekicks to a subservient status, but rather to make a connection to the commonly held understanding of the character in the general consciousness.

Sidekicks and the Archetypal Hero

An examination of the under-explored role of the sidekick begins in the established and much explored role of the hero, surely the most-often studied variety of main character. The hero is, in the traditional sense, the character placed in the forefront of the action—the one who embarks upon a quest, or finds him or herself entrusted with protecting the innocent in the face of evil. The extensive literary theory of the hero is based in archetypal studies: the heroes we have come to know and love (and expect) are based on universal attributes found throughout histories, mythologies, and literatures of many cultures. Some of the major names in literary theory that I cover here include Northrop Frye, Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and Claude Levi-Strauss.

A fine entrance into the world of archetypal studies comes through Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957). Frye begins the study of archetypes in “a world of myth, an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience” (136). In this way, Frye suggests the study of archetypes (as they are inherently outside the realm of achievability) works best when coupled with the study of myth since it too is a sort of unattainable reality (136). Furthermore, Frye contends myth is “the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire” (136). To illustrate actions pushing the boundaries of what we consider “conceivable,” Frye offers an image of how “the gods enjoy beautiful women, fight one another with prodigious strength,

comfort and assist man, or else watch his miseries from the height of their immortal freedom” (136).

While not exactly the gods of ancient mythology, the superheroes of the 20th and 21st centuries are certainly akin to the gods of old. In fact, Superman fits Frye’s image of the divine archetype perfectly. He romances beautiful women (Lois Lane, Lana Lang, Wonder Woman), and the strength he uses to fight unstoppable villains like Apocalypse from *The Death of Superman* (Jurgens 138+) increases the longer he stays under earth’s yellow sun, making him “invulnerable,” like in Mark Waid and Alex Ross’s *Kingdom Come* (Waid 129), among others. Moreover, Superman’s goal has always been to assist the people of earth, and his Fortress of Solitude often lets him internalize “his miseries” as it is a symbol of the height of his “immortal freedom.” If superheroes fit so well into the role of mythic god, what role would a sidekick fulfill, or what about sidekicks would we find inconceivable? For at least a partial answer to these questions, I turn to Joseph Campbell.

While his writings on the hero archetype are now somewhat dated, Campbell still offers one of the most accessible definitions of what makes a hero. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* describes the “monomyth,” the nucleus of any number of mythic heroic tales. Campbell writes:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (30)

If this description, then, is the minimal core of all adventures, only three steps are needed: to venture forth, encounter fabulous forces in battle, and a return with power. Of these three, the

venturing out and return seem definitive and certain. Much greater possible variation stems from the “fabulous forces” that the hero encounters while venturing from the known world. One part of the narrative of fabulous forces is “Supernatural Aid,” briefly defined as “the unsuspected assistance that comes to one who has undertaken his proper adventure” (36). This aid often comes in the form of a “protective figure,” described as a crone or old man (69). Campbell, as he does with most of his assertions, provides examples of these figures from myths collected from various cultures. In addition to the supernatural protective figure(s), Campbell makes reference to those simply called “helpers,” of which some “give magical aid” (246). It is interesting to note that the supernatural aid comes from mentoring figures such as aged men or wizards: older, wiser, and in some ways more powerful than the hero. The remaining helper characters, those without empowering abilities, are the sidekicks. Notably absent from the illustrations Campbell provides to visually represent the heroic cycle, these sidekicks exist outside of Campbell’s scope. Understandably, Campbell’s intention is to present the monomythic role of the *hero*, not of the helper. Regardless, Campbell either does not find it necessary to include any sidekick figures, or simply did not bother to record any in his study of ancient mythologies. Both possibilities tell of the subsidiary consideration of sidekicks in literary history.

A third prominent version of archetypal criticism can be found in the work of Carl Jung and his theory of the collective unconscious. Like Campbell, Jung postulates the basis of all similarities found within cultures, artifacts, and memories. Unlike Campbell, who analyzed the literary similarities between myths, Jung analyzed the psychological (or psychiatric, and arguably spiritual) origins of the human “universal” (43). In short, Jung began by offering the archetype as evidence of a “psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature

which is identical in all individuals” (43). The archetype, in this instance, refers not just to the motifs found in mythological research, e.g. Campbell’s heroic cycle. Jung takes it one step farther, calling the archetype-motif a “pre-existent form . . . recognized and named in other fields of knowledge” (43). Whether or not one subscribes to Jung’s postulate of a shared, universal, and subconscious archetype, the evidence supporting the theory marshals convincing psychological evidence that there are recognizable universals found in the classic hero myths.

While Jung and Campbell worked from (or towards) applications of a universal archetype, Claude Levi-Strauss dismissed this idea—at least as a way to understanding myth. Specifically, Levi-Strauss objects to any assertion, Jung’s or otherwise, that the archetype *itself* contains “a certain meaning” (218). Levi-Strauss makes it clear that in linguistic terms, this is akin to suggesting that sounds have inherent meanings apart from their formation of words (208). Instead, Levi-Strauss intends to show how archetypes exist as the semantic building blocks from which myths are made: “myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units” (210). This is not surprising, given his assertion that myths function (and exist) as a form of language, or even as language itself. Levi-Strauss strips myths down in the same way he might pare down the phonemes, morphemes and sememes of a particular language. Continuing in his discussion of these constituent units, Levi-Strauss asserts that myth uses these units to “produce a meaning” by way of bundling and combining them (211). If we were to use Levi-Strauss’s system of mapping “gross constituent units” (211) as a way to trace out the utilization of sidekicks throughout myth and history, it would undoubtedly prove worthwhile. As heroes hold a position as a constituent unit of storytelling, so too can sidekicks, according to the semiotics of Levi-Strauss.

In a similar vein, children's literature scholar Maria Nikolajeva offers an interesting structural reinterpretation of how main characters and secondary characters hold varying positions in their relation to the plot. In *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature*, Nikolajeva builds upon previous work done by W. J. Harvey's *Character and the Novel*, suggesting that the "common and simple division of characters into main and secondary does not seem quite sufficient" (Nikolajeva 112). Her solution, then, is to further sub-categorize secondary characters into "supporting characters," "satellite characters," and "backdrop characters" (112). The supporting characters exist as both plot-central characters (with the protagonists) and plot-peripheral characters (alongside satellite and backdrop characters). Her argument is that "the plot cannot develop" if main or supporting characters were removed (112). In spite of this recognition, however, Nikolajeva's consideration of secondary characters continues to function as only a small piece of the greater whole in her study of characters.

Other scholars who write about characters, archetypes, and modern myths have given even less consideration to the sidekick. For instance, in their text *The Myth of the American Superhero*, John Lawrence and Robert Jewett offer an understanding of a culturally specific adaptation of a hero's journey: reinterpreting the hero as a Christ-figure. But where is Peter in their scheme? Lawrence and Jewett make no room for such vital secondary characters in their American monomyth:

A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory

restores the community to its paradisiacal condition: the superhero then recedes into obscurity. (6)

Absent from the nucleus of this monomyth is the sidekick, even though Lawrence and Jewett apply their American monomyth to a variety of genres including comic books, where sidekicks appear regularly (Doty 244). In fact, the American monomyth's premium on selflessness, as well as placing the good of society over the glory of a single hero, has placed a strong foothold in the world of comic book superheroes—as the archetypal Superman mythos undoubtedly reads like a monomythic primer in all things selfless, American, and Edenic. Lawrence and Jewett rightly focus on comic books in exploring their American monomyth, but, as I would stress, sidekicks may be just as important to a literary monomyth as they are in comic books themselves.

Although comic books will not be the primary focus of this dissertation, they are worth a short digression here in my introduction, since I believe that comics, along with YA, form the two most productive loci for the sidekick in all of literary history. Comic books themselves are currently experiencing exposure and legitimacy like never before, if only as measured on screen. In particular, big-budget comic book-based-movies are blazing an unmistakable trail through the American—and global—box office. In doing so, they also blaze their way into public awareness. As of May 2016, no fewer than thirteen films and four spin-off television shows have been released as part of an effort by Marvel Comics (and Disney) to bring proprietary titles to the realm of movies and television (“Marvel Cinematic Universe”). Several of these films have eclipsed the \$1 billion mark in box-office sales world-wide. At least nine more films plan to be released in the next three years, not counting the six television series currently under production (“Marvel Cinematic Universe”). This does not even take into consideration the highly successful

Batman trilogy directed by Christopher Nolan, the Superman reboot films (*Man of Steel* [2013], *Superman v Batman* [2016]), the five Spider-man films, the three Fantastic Four films, the eight X-Men films, among others. Even those who have never seen any of these films could have scarcely missed the titanic efforts behind merchandizing. While not quite as well-known as the movies based on comic books, literary criticism of comics has consistently recognized the importance of sidekicks, as I will explain in the next section.

The Study of Comic Book Sidekicks

The most prominent and well-developed studies of the sidekick are found in the criticism devoted to comic books. Superheroes almost universally have sidekicks, a fact that cannot be ignored by comic book scholars. Research that stems from sociocultural subjects other than comic books, per se, will naturally tend to subsume the sidekick into a larger context, rather than exploring it as a unique literary facet of its own. For instance, to what extent are there homosexual overtones in the relationships between superheroes and sidekicks? Or, how does a sidekick serve to entice a certain readership, whether women, minorities, or someone younger than the typical hero? While sidekicks exist as staples in comic books and graphic novels, they are often disregarded when a desire for “legitimacy” arises. This is often seen in film adaptations of comics, most notably Robin’s absence from Christopher Nolan’s *Batman* trilogy.

Comic book scholarship offers many avenues of sidekick research. For instance, Richard Reynolds suggests Frank Miller’s use of Carrie Kelly as the thirteen-year-old female Robin in *The Dark Knight Returns* radically changes the meaning of Batman’s sidekick (100). Studies such as Reynolds’ underscore how sidekicks are a viable and compelling part of the superhero genre. Beyond this, Coogan’s influential study, *Superhero: The Secret Origin of a Genre* argues

that sidekicks are not just generic conventions, but are in fact an inherent part of the mythological heritage of comics. Coogan writes, “The surface similarities between superheroes and mythological heroes are several” (117). Among these similarities are “the crossing of heroes and gods into each other’s stories,” something Coogan ties to the “crossovers, guest stars, and team-ups” often found in comic book continuities (117). Additionally, Coogan suggests the exemplary Batman mythos is “brimming with the conventions” of heroic literature, including “the helpful authority figure—Police Commissioner Gordon; the sidekick—Robin. . . and so forth” (41). As he touts the debt comic books owe to ancient mythologies, Coogan suggests comic book sidekicks mirror those found of old: “Enkidu serves as Gilgamesh’s sidekick just as Patroclus did for Achilles, Iolaus and Hylas for Hercules, and Robin for Batman” (118).

Coogan’s choice to focus on Batman as mythic hero and Robin as his sidekick is a logical one; Robin is one of the oldest recognized sidekicks in comic book history. Moreover, and more to the point of this dissertation, Robin also provides a connection to young adults. In *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, Bradford W. Wright calls Robin’s introduction in 1940 the creation of a character “with whom young readers could supposedly identify” (17). In their cultural study, *Enter the Superheroes*, Alex Romagnoli and Gian Pagnucci describe this further: “Robin perfectly fit with the age of the young boys buying Batman comic books at the time, and sales reportedly doubled as a result of his introduction” (172). Romagnoli and Pagnucci suggest Robin was a conduit through which young readers could invest themselves in Batman. Because they were younger than Batman, “comic book readers could imagine themselves as a kid sidekick, and comic books quickly filled with them” (172).

Robin's introduction, then, very nicely brings the young adult reader into the conversation about sidekicks.

While Robin (in all of his or her iterations) begins as a young teenager (or younger), comic book writers recognized how their readers aged with the passage of time and allowed Robin to age alongside them. This process slowed down around the end of the 1970s, keeping the first Robin, Dick Grayson, in his "mid-twenties at the oldest" (Coogan 213). The 1980s, then, saw the introduction of newer—and younger—Robins as a neat and tidy way to re-entice younger readership to pick up Batman comics. The need to relate to a youthful character (in this case, the sidekick) is a phenomenon readily recognized in YA. Yet as Robin's exact age posed a problem, so too does the definition of what constitutes a "young adult."

Defining Young Adult Literature

As this dissertation partners sidekicks and YA, it becomes necessary to define what is meant by the term "Young Adult Literature." From the beginning of criticism on children's literature, defining YA has been an ongoing problem. Definitions based on the age of the intended audience have often restricted certain works to the continuum of "juvenile literature," placing YA works alongside children's chapter books, illustrated storybooks, and read-to-me editions. Also problematic for establishing a definition, YA texts also consistently exhibit adult themes and storylines. While we can easily differentiate between the gang clashes of *The Outsiders* and the depiction of second grade in *The Beast in Ms. Rooney's Room*, it is more difficult to make that distinction between books intended for fifth- through eighth-grade reading levels. On the other end of the teenaged spectrum, texts dance along the line dividing YA from traditional "adult" fiction. Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* cycles ask significant questions

regarding life, death, power, and gender—but are not always considered adult fare. Which is which, and does it matter? The issue of whether or not it matters how a book is categorized is something of a passing concern for this dissertation (although I would love to enter into that debate elsewhere). What is necessary is choosing and moving forward with a working definition of YA texts.

However, many scholars of YA themselves have found defining YA to be difficult or nearly impossible. Michael Cart's *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* chronicles this historical growth of YA (and adolescence itself, for that matter), and Cart equates offering a definition for "young adult" to something "migraine inducing" (8). One of his many examples of attempted definitions (of both "young adult" and "young adult literature") comes from the writings of Isabelle Holland: "I am coming more and more to the conclusion that adolescent literature is whatever any adolescent happens to be reading at any given time" (qtd. in Cart, *Young Adult* 8). Betty Carter, in her article "Adult Books for Young Adults," offers this opinion: "Books are designated adult or young adult merely to distinguish the publishing divisions they come from, not to set absolute boundaries which define readership" (63). Carter's purpose in finding a definition lies in her need to make "appropriate selections" from both camps when the need arises (63), arguing that marketing is one of the biggest sources of the differentiation between adult and young adult texts. The overriding aim of book marketing is to "spend the advertising dollar where it has the potential of drawing the most sales," which, according to Carter, is the schools and libraries acquiring YA—those institutions more likely to "purchase more copies of a hardcover book than [will] individual young adults" (64). Carter, while clearly demarcating the publication differences, is careful not to malign the literary status of either:

“Maya Angelou, Harper Lee, Olive Ann Burns, David Halberstam, and Michael Dorris, adult authors favored by many young adults, are all well respected literary figures whose mastery of craft both challenges and captivates their readers” (64).

But surely a suitable definition of YA need not cover all possibilities, nor rely solely on the convenience of publishers. I will turn here to Nilsen and Donelson’s *Literature for Today’s Young Adults*, an excellent resource in choosing a definition for this study. Long-time students of pioneering YA scholar G. Robert Carlsen, Nilsen and Donelson have studied the genre over the course of an over forty year partnership in scholarship and publishing. Their definition of YA begins with “anything that readers between the approximate ages of twelve and eighteen choose to read either for leisure reading or to fill school assignments” (3). Even as they offer such a fluid range of ages from which to define a genre, they acknowledge subgenres like “Tween fiction” that further splinter the “young adult” spectrum (4). Perhaps most fittingly, and most helpful here, Nilsen and Donelson quote the highly respected, long-time YA critic and advocate Patty Campbell in an attempt to define the genre thematically:

The central theme of most YA fiction is becoming an adult, finding the answer to the question “Who am I and what am I going to do about it?” No matter what events are going on in the book, accomplishing that task is really what the book is about, and in the climactic moment the resolution of the external conflict is linked to a realization for the protagonist that helps shape an adult identity. (qtd. in Nilsen and Donelson 4)

If YA’s core theme is “Who am I and what am I going to do about it?,” this sounds much like the historical coming-of-age novel, the *Bildungsroman*. Although YA has no exclusive claim on the

genre, YA has undoubtedly re-appropriated the *Bildungsroman* as its own throughout its emergence and development as a separate genre over the past fifty years. In this vein, and for the purposes of this dissertation, if a text struggles with this central question of how adult identity should be shaped, it will be considered part of YA. This definition, coupled with Nilsen and Donelson's point that "puberty is a universal experience but adolescence is not" (Cart, *Young Adult* 7), opens the door for even more supposedly "adult" texts to be considered part of YA—as it is certainly possible for "adults" older than eighteen to need to shape their maturing identities through internal or external conflict.

Chapter Summaries

Before diving in to YA literature's treatment of sidekicks, it is important and worthwhile to explore the general nature of sidekicks: this will be the purpose of Chapter One. There are a number of established literary roles which a sidekick can play. Among them, some typical sidekick functions include acting as a "narrative gateway" through which the reader can better understand an enigmatic protagonist; as a "devil's advocate" to provide conflicting views; as "comic relief" to an otherwise serious hero; or as an "intellectual foil" to contrast with the protagonist. Ron Buchanan's "'Side by Side': The Role of the Sidekick" helps frame this chapter, as it has performed a similar study, albeit on a smaller, more limited scale. Buchanan explores the sidekick as "confidant," "sounding board," and a way to "bring the audience into the story" (17). These examples augment my own study, bolstering what I see as the "narrative gateway" role. Major texts analyzed in this chapter include Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, Harper Lee's *How to Kill a Mockingbird*, Ben Edlund's *The Tick*, and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, among others.

Chapter Two explores in greater depth how YA uses and adapts established dynamics of heroes and sidekicks by viewing the possible combinations of males and females in either role. Family dynamics give this chapter its framework, as I explore possibilities like mother-daughter, father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, etc. Examples come from texts already introduced in Chapter One, as well as other texts including Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, the *Nancy Drew* series, Tamora Pierce's *Alanna*, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*, and Jasper Fforde's *The Last Dragonslayer*.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five examine the ways YA elevates the sidekick beyond the conventions defined by the family dynamics of Chapter Two. I argue that there are three such patterns in which YA sidekicks get elevated: the "secondary hero" (Chapter Three), the "sidekick sequel" (Chapter Four), and the sidekick "meta-novel" (Chapter Five). I distinguish between the second and third kinds of sidekick elevation by the original intent of the character in question. In the former, the sidekick has appeared as a secondary character in a previous novel, and has now become the main character in a later work. By contrast, the "meta-novel" begins with a new character in a new situation. Chapter Three's "secondary hero" is illustrated through close analysis of Neville Longbottom from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Tenar from Le Guin's *Earthsea* series. The "sidekick sequel" in Chapter Four focuses on a close reading of Shay from Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series, as well as Bean from Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow*. Chapter Five looks at a number of sidekick "meta-novels," including Jack Ferraiolo's *Sidekicks*, Auralee Wallace's *Sidekick*, and John David Anderson's *Sidekicked*.

The Conclusion will offer suggestions for further study related to this dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

FOUR SIDEKICK ROLES

This chapter, in conjunction with Chapter Two, serves as a literary-historical and critical foundation for the subsequent chapters of the dissertation. In chapters Three through Five, I will discuss how YA takes pre-established sidekick roles and changes them: stretching the very definition of sidekick. Before showing how the sidekick has changed, it is necessary to recognize how the sidekick has historically been established in the literary realm, with particular attention to the areas of criticism outlined in the Introduction: archetypal, comic book, and YA scholarship. I argue that there are four classic sidekick roles: narrative gateway, devil's advocate, comic relief, and intellectual foil. Recognizing these roles also allows me to highlight how they have been prolifically adapted in YA in particular. For each role, I will analyze an example from both a genre traditionally defined as "adult fiction," and from YA. These pairings will also underscore the complicated definitional relationship between adult fiction and YA, as outlined in the Introduction. Moreover, there are significant differences in how adult texts and YA texts use or treat the sidekicks within their stories. Discussing these differences not only allows me to lay some groundwork for further YA considerations in future chapters, but also shows how YA has tended to employ sidekicks carefully and creatively, in due consideration of its core readership.

Before proceeding, I should also make an observation about the selection of the literary examples cited in this chapter. While a hero/sidekick pairing can occur almost anywhere, I find certain genres lend themselves more easily to a hero/sidekick relationship: those requiring the fulfillment of a quest or the solving of a problem. Fantasy's preoccupation with the quest almost always demands a supporting cast for its hero. Mystery novels often have sidekicks as well, no

doubt taking after the memorable detecting sidekicks created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allen Poe. Comic book superheroes fall into both of these categories—they are typically crime/mystery tales, with a touch (or a ton) of the fantastic or supernatural. Many of the texts I examine come from the literary genres of fantasy or mystery for this very reason.

Role One: Narrative Gateway

The first role, the one I consider the easiest to define, is a sidekick as a “narrative gateway” through which the reader can better understand or sympathize with an enigmatic hero. Ron Buchanan, in “Side by Side: The Role of the Sidekick,” refers to this role as a “confidant,” or as “a sounding board for the main character” (17). This sounding board “represents the audience and through the interplay with the main character brings the audience into the story” (17). For instance, nearly all of the “assistants” from the vast *Dr. Who* continuum (1963-89; 2005-present), have worked to help explain the ins and outs of the Time Lord’s complexities. Another notable science-fiction example reverses the roles: how *Star Trek*’s hero Captain Kirk helps illustrate the humanity of the supremely logical Mr. Spock, the Vulcan sidekick. In fact, every incarnation of *Star Trek* has followed this pattern of the hero serving as the narrative gateway for the sidekick: Picard and Data (*The Next Generation*), Sisko and Odo (*Deep Space Nine*), Janeway and Tuvok/Chakotay (*Voyager*), and Archer and T’Pol (*Enterprise*). Regardless, it is much more common for a given narrative’s hero to need the illumination provided by a sidekick. Richard Castle, from ABC’s *Castle*, helps introduce the viewer to the procedural methods of the emotionally-distant homicide detective Kate Beckett—the hero from the NYPD. Dr. Leonard Hofstadter from CBS’s *The Big Bang Theory* helps the viewer understand the socially-impaired Dr. Sheldon Cooper. (As a hero/sidekick pairing, Hofstadter and Cooper are so

necessary to each other that they are de facto co-protagonists.) However, the quintessential literary example of the sidekick as a narrative gateway is Dr. Watson, as nearly all of the reader's impressions of Sherlock Holmes come from the good doctor's point of view. For this reason, I use Watson to introduce the narrative gateway in detail. From YA literature, I cite Scout and Jem from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as they also help the reader better understand the greater narrative as a whole.

Dr. Watson

Sherlock Holmes's sidekick Dr. John Hamish Watson has seen something of a renaissance in recent years. As Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Michael Dirda puts it, "Nigel Bruce portrayed Watson as a bumbling idiot, but more recently actors such as Edward Hardwicke, Jude Law and Martin Freeman have shown that he is, in his own way, as admirable as his better-known friend" (42) not to mention the portrayal of Joan Watson by Lucy Liu in CBS's television show *Elementary* (2012-present). Re-examining the source material suggests that Watson has always deserved more than the memorably blustering portrayal of Nigel Bruce. *A Study in Scarlet* is the first case Dr. Watson "writes down" regarding his partnership with consulting detective Sherlock Holmes. Although Doyle would go on to more fully develop the relationship between the two, the dynamic of Watson's deference and disbelief in light of Holmes' observations and "deductions" are firmly established even at this early venture. Watson is an obvious narrative gateway through which "the great thinking machine" was "gradually humanised [*sic*]" (Dirda 42). Obviously, all of Doyle's descriptions and considerations of Holmes are imagined as coming from Dr. Watson's pen. Consider his physical description of Holmes during their first days together: "In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively

lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing . . . and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision” (A. Doyle 14). Also included is Watson’s initial checklist regarding Holmes’s knowledge: “Knowledge of Literature.—Nil . . . Knows nothing of practical gardening . . . Knowledge of Chemistry.—Profound” (16). The inward tendencies of this hero would be lost without the first-person narration provided by this sidekick.

The second way in which Watson is the narrative gateway is his meticulous recording and recounting of the varied deductions Holmes gives. Here is Watson recording, in Sherlock’s own stream of consciousness, how Sherlock deduces that Watson is a military doctor who has been wounded in Afghanistan:

Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan. (20-21)

Such passages of Holmes piecing together seemingly innocuous details create the bread and butter of the Sherlock Holmes mythos—and it is thanks to Watson’s diligent efforts in narrative “note-taking.” Similar narrations of deduction appear throughout the *Sherlock Holmes* books, and are unquestionably characteristic of the detective and the detective genre itself.

The third and final way Watson is a narrative gateway is found in Watson's musing as to Holmes's perceptiveness in unraveling a case. As Holmes gathers evidence upon his arrival at the crime scene in *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson remarks, "I was unable to see how my companion could hope to learn anything from it. Still, I had had such extraordinary evidence of the quickness of his perceptive faculties, that I had no doubt that he could see a great deal which was hidden from me" (26). Watson's impression that a great deal has been hidden from him turns out, as it always does, to be true. In this instance, the particulars gleaned from the crime scene include the height of the murderer, the type of his footwear, his choice in cigar, and the length of his fingernails (33). When Holmes tells Watson how he came to these conclusions, Watson replies quite assuredly, "you have brought detection as near an exact science as it ever will be brought in this world" (36).

Watson's assertion that Holmes has taken detection to a scientific level summarizes, at least at the superficial level, an insight into the way Holmes's mind operates. A more focused study of Watson would undoubtedly reveal how completely he shows "his" readers the mind of the consulting detective—as well as his own, for it is his pen that supposedly produces the stories. In praise of Watson's narrative ability, Owen Edwards recognizes that although "naturally" bundled with other "secondary personalities, there to interpret great but unfathomable heroes," Watson belongs to a more revered archetype (Edwards xxxiv). That archetype, according to Edwards, includes various protagonists who serve as narrative gateways: Everyman, Bunyan's Christian, and the protagonist of Langland's *Piers Plowman*—they are all the "eternal seeker . . . crossed with the eternal disciple" (Edwards xxxv). When the protagonist is unable to fill that seeker-disciple role, enter Dr. Watson: the sidekick as narrative gateway.

Scout and Jem

As the lead characters in a classic YA novel, Scout and Jem Finch form an excellent example of how a sidekick can function as a narrative gateway for the protagonist. That Scout narrates the text further aligns it with the already discussed first-person narration of Dr. Watson. Since I consider *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a YA text, it is notable that what Scout and Jem express differently is their youthfulness as the story is retold. Dean Shackleford points to this element of the novel as well, stating that “part of the novel’s success has to do with the adult-as-child perspective” (par. 3). Scout is a young girl during the events (when the story begins, she is age six), but is certainly older in its retelling. Scout has not put her thoughts down on paper while still a youth—indeed, a good amount of time has passed since the experiences recounted and the actual narration. Part of the difference between Scout and Dr. Watson, for example, is in Scout’s somewhat limited ability in understanding what is actually going on during the narration, as opposed to Dr. Watson’s more learned and practiced writing. However, as is the case with all stories told after long passage of time, both Scout and Watson give their ruminations from a more experienced vantage. For example, when the major conflict of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is introduced, Scout finds herself eavesdropping on her father’s conversation with his brother, Uncle Jack:

“You know what’s going to happen as well as I do, Jack, and I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb’s usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I do not pretend to

understand . . . I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers
instead of listening to the town. I hope they trust me enough . . .” (Lee 88)

Scout does not reveal the deeper meaning of Atticus’s words, in part because the details of the case brought against Tom Robinson have yet to be disclosed to the reader, but also in part because as a girl of seven or eight (time has passed since the book began), the full implications of what was said are understandably lost. However, as she leaves to go back to bed, having been told by Atticus to do so, she states “it was not until many years later that I realized he wanted me to hear every word he said” (89). The narrative dichotomy that exists, then, is the youthful Scout describing events as she saw them at age seven or eight, and then explaining their significance some years later. Shackleford suggests Lee gives this “image of an adult reflecting on her past” as a recollection of “her own childhood” (par. 3).

The literary theory of autobiography underscores the complexity we see here in Scout’s narrative. In *Reading Autobiography: Interpreting Life Narratives*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson theorize that “the narrated memory is an interpretation of a past that can never be fully recovered” (22). Granted, Scout’s memory must be perfect in the fictional sense—she remembers whatever Lee wants her to remember. At the same time, however, her narrative (and Lee’s own attempts at fictionalizing this experience) lends itself to this active re-interpretation of events from an older perspective. Keeping in mind the pervasive influence of Jim Crow laws in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it becomes clear that Scout’s memories of the racially-torn South makes her use of memory an act of political record-making. As Smith and Watson argue, “what is recollected and what is obscured . . . is central to the cultural production of knowledge about the past” (25). Lee’s writing about race relations in the early part of the 20th century makes Scout

“authorized to remember . . . both personally and collectively” the political ramifications of her youth (Smith and Watson 25). Scout moves beyond Watson’s primary narrative role as a reporter in this sense, as she offers another kind of narrative gateway, namely a collective memory of major events of her time.

Another significant move beyond Watson’s reporting role is Scout serving as a narrative gateway to reveal how Jem grows. Scout is certainly Jem’s sidekick, regardless of the fact that one of the novel’s major themes is the distance in their relationship created by her growing older. Scout spends a considerable amount of time studying the changes occurring in her older brother, as well as how he reacts to the events Atticus finds himself involved in. In this way, Scout serves as the observant eye capturing and translating the events that are bringing Jem into manhood—many of which come from Atticus in one form or another. Not only does Scout’s role as narrative gateway allow a look into Jem’s maturation, but this theme is also fundamental to the literary dynamic of YA. Granted, this theme of growing up is not exclusive to YA, but it is certainly a pillar of the genre and occurs with much more frequency than in others. Roberta Seelinger Trites makes this clear in her study *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. Trites asks, “what children’s book *is not* about growth?” (10). Trites draws a distinction between books of growth (*Entwicklungsromane*—“virtually all children’s and adolescent novels”) and books where an adolescent emerges into adulthood (*Bildungsromane*—“the protagonist comes of age as an adult”) (*Disturbing* 10). In light of this distinction, Scout’s gateway into Jem’s growth stays within the broader genre of the *Entwicklungsroman*, as Jem is decidedly not an adult at the novel’s end. However, as an older Scout narrates recollections from her past, her own experience becomes part of the *Bildungsroman* tradition. This complex interplay

in *To Kill a Mockingbird* between the two fundamental thematic forms of YA is driven by the narrative gatekeeping of the sidekick, and in this regard is far more interesting than the static window of adulthood of Dr. Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*.

The very nature of the sidekick as narrative gateway helps us see one of the most basic ways that a sidekick can function: in this instance, to better introduce the hero. Dr. Watson asks the questions of Holmes that allows the detective to showcase his observant and “deductive” prowess. Scout’s position as an older voice retelling the events she witnessed as a young girl brings a very specific lens through which to view Atticus, Jem, and the sociopolitical tensions of their era. Understanding how the narrative gateway operates is essential to the analysis of Orson Scott Card’s character Bean in Chapter Four below. Bean first appears in *Ender’s Game* and is revisited in *Ender’s Shadow*, and although he ends as something significantly more, he begins as a narrative gateway.

Role Two: Devil’s Advocate

Just as the narrative gateway role allows a sidekick to reveal a hero’s nature, the devil’s advocate role also reveals elements of the hero; in this case, the role shows (in part) how a sidekick can challenge, hone, and improve a hero’s decision-making. This role seems partially nestled within the narrative gateway role, but they do exist independently. “Devil’s advocate” could be alternatively titled “the voice of reason,” a distinction that helps introduce how the role works. Penny, from the *Inspector Gadget* cartoon series (and two theatrical films) is a good beginning example, as her uncle Gadget is clearly oblivious to what needs to happen to get the job done. To borrow once again from *Star Trek*, Dr. McCoy, with his cool medical professionalism, is the devil’s advocate for Captain Kirk and his head-strong optimism and

recklessness. A somewhat quirky, but fitting example could be made of Wilson the volleyball from Robert Zemeckis's film *Cast Away* (2000). While never actually speaking, Wilson offers "advice" that Tom Hanks's character Chuck Noland argues with . . . until realizing that Wilson was right all along.

In canonical literature, a good place to ground this examination is Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, highlighting how Sancho acts as the voice of reason (pathetic as it may be) to the unrealistic actions of Quixote. Perhaps the quintessential moment of Sancho's action as the voice of reason is his very first: his exhortation for Don Quixote to not attack the windmills. In reply to Don Quixote's desire for "righteous warfare" against the "thirty or so wild giants" with "huge arms," Sancho states that the windmills "aren't giants. . . and what seem to be arms are just their sails, that go around in the wind and turn the millstone" (Cervantes 43). Nevertheless, and in spite of Sancho's continued shouts that "without any question it was windmills," Don Quixote attacks the windmills (44). While this instance places Sancho in the role of reason, it is hard to forget his willingness to leave his farm, his wife, and his children all in the hope of becoming governor of his very own island—promised to him by Don Quixote. If this is the mental state of one who "virtually encapsulates . . . every one of the squirely virtues to be found anywhere" (Cervantes 11), then someone like Arthur from Ben Edlund's comic book/television show/cartoon, *The Tick*, follows perfectly in this tradition.

Like Don Quixote, The Tick is a hero exceedingly oblivious to much of reality. (The capitalization of the definitive article "The" in The Tick's name reinforces the superhero-spoof nature of this series.) The Tick's sidekick, Arthur, works tirelessly to help The Tick survive, and as *The Tick* exists in various media, there are a number of versions of Arthur to consider.

Recognizing the somewhat limited existence of Arthur in all three formats of *The Tick* also presents an opportunity for a methodological digression on character studies—do we look at this triple Arthur as a unified whole, or as three different and distinct characters? *The Tick* is also my first example from a comic book, which brings into play the history and criticism of that medium. For the YA example of a devil’s advocate, I argue Huckleberry Finn fulfills this scenario in Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer*. The way Twain creates verbal interplay between Tom and Huck makes their hero/sidekick relationship inherently complex.

Arthur

Arthur does more than simply follow in the Sancho Panza/Quixotic tradition—he also falls into the tradition of comic book/superhero parody. (Coupled with the number of times *Don Quixote* has been parodied, or viewed as metaparody, the connection deepens even further). According to Thomas Schatz, in order for a parody to be successful, the audience must have a proper “saturation” of the original genre. Unsuccessful parody falls on deaf ears without such saturation—it simply does not work (Schatz 39). The success of *The Tick*—and of Arthur—stems back to the readily accepted conventions of a superhero and his or her sidekick. Peter Coogan, while studying the superhero-genre as a whole, believes such acceptance happens in “mini-cycles within each stage” of comic book development (197). By the time Arthur arrives as *The Tick*’s sidekick, the genre has reached the end of another mini-cycle. Arthur, like *The Tick* for that matter, falls far outside the normative superhero expectation; he too is clearly a parody. A memorable example of the extent to which *The Tick* uses parody (and even metaparody in this case) comes from the episode titled, “The Tick vs. The Tick,” in which Arthur is denied access to a superhero club and is forced to go to “the Sidekick’s Lounge,” a run-down shack located

behind the club. The parody inherent in *The Tick* brings the devil's advocate role into sharper focus. It is the conventions of parody that allows the sidekick to so completely occupy the "brains department" of the superhero/sidekick duo.

Considering how integral his intellect makes him, it is a wonder that it takes Arthur four issues to arrive. In the fifth issue, "Early Morning of a Million Zillion Ninjas," we learn that Arthur is a former clerk, who bought a mechanical flying moth suit and decided to fight crime. At this point in the comic's story arc, it is clear that The Tick is mentally unstable, evidenced by nearly all of his inner thoughts ("Last night I almost had a lucid moment" [Edlund, "Early Morning" 6]), clueless interactions with other characters ("I saw you on TV, Clark! I came to Team-up with you! You can be the sidekick, okay?" [Edlund, "High Rise Hijinx" 8]), and the fact that the first frame of the first issue shows him straight-jacketed inside a mental institution (Edlund, "The Tick" 1). Arthur, on the other hand, quickly shows himself to be on the ball and adept in fighting crime—at least intellectually—when he advises The Tick and Paul the Samurai (a sword-wielding ally) on how to properly proceed. Moreover, and in keeping with the devil's advocate/voice of reason role, Arthur successfully opposes the agenda of The Tick and Paul the Samurai: "We want to swim in the hot, flowing river of our foe's blood," followed enthusiastically by The Tick's "Yeah!" (Edlund, "Early Morning" 15). Arthur wisely advises to simply allow the enemy to come to them, which is what happens (15).

Arthur also offers an intriguing look into the nature of literary character, which I believe is beneficial to consider here. Because Arthur exists in three different media (comic, cartoon, and live action television), he exists as three slightly different, yet still interconnected personas. In fact, because of Arthur's limited, and very recent, existence, it becomes essential to consider all

three. (Something similar could be performed with virtually any character from the intentionally altered versions of Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* as it appears in text, radio, stage, and film. Ford Prefect, sidekick to protagonist Arthur Dent, would be a good starting point.) As Edlund was instrumental in the creation of *The Tick* cartoon and Fox Network's live action adaptation, many of the same scenes showing the early interactions between Arthur and The Tick are found in all three versions.

What is most compelling here are the differing amounts of crime fighting prowess Arthur possesses in each. In the comic, he is well-informed, confident, and has a decent muscular physique despite his self-description as "chubby." It is also suggested that he has been unsuccessfully trying to involve himself in superhero intrigue for some time. The cartoon version of Arthur, on the other hand, embraces the influence of parody even more fully. He is introduced while still working as an accountant—fresh and naïve to the world of superheroes and often frightened to boot ("The Tick vs. The Idea Men"). The live-action series Arthur closely mimics the cartoon version (*The Tick*). The role Arthur plays as the voice of reason is not diminished in any way, but his authority to do so lessens in correlation to his experience. In fact, the comic book Arthur is better equipped to play the hero role than The Tick, the only exceptions being The Tick's nigh-invulnerability and his penchant for finding trouble; Arthur's only power is self-powered flight, and he can't find intrigue despite his best efforts. (This kind of cross-medium character study is further developed and utilized in Chapter Three.)

Huckleberry Finn

While it is certainly possible to perform a similar, cross-medium study of Huckleberry Finn (considering the myriad ways he has been characterized over 140 years), it is not quite as

necessary. Instead, all that is needed are a few examples of Huck's moments as the voice of reason in Twain's *Tom Sawyer*. Indeed, they are each other's voices of reason, and alternate as sidekicks in each other's respective titular novels. Their occasional falling out as friends also creates situations where *neither* is the voice of reason, as they take turns ignoring each other or take turns projecting responsibility for the situation onto the other. The most telling of these situations is their discussion after witnessing Injun Joe murder Dr. Robinson and frame Potter (Twain 78). Their dialogue deals mostly with whether or not to tell the authorities of the murder:

[Tom]: "Who'll tell? We?"

[Huck]: "What are you talking about? S'pose something happened and Injun Joe *didn't* hang? Why he'd kill us some time or other, just as dead sure as we're a-laying here."

[Tom]: "That's just what I was thinking to myself, Huck." (80-81)

In this first instance, Huck offers his decidedly forceful opinion on what to do, convincing Tom, who not only quickly acquiesces, but also suggests that Huck's opinion was his own from the start. Tom asks if Huck can keep the information to himself, making an effort to ensure the plan is possible. Huck replies in the affirmative (81). In this case, as before, Tom is the initiator—he asks for Huck's opinion. Huck, while adamant in giving it, also seems to wait for Tom's choice to listen to the advice. It is possible that Tom would have reached the same conclusions without Huck's influence, but the knowledge does indeed lie with Huck in this instance.

Coupling this conversation with another previously had by Tom and Huck (about whether or not a dead cat can help rid oneself of a wart [54]), the line between who is hero and who is sidekick blurs: the roles the boys play could be swapped. This relative interchangeability is

further problematized with the text of *Huckleberry Finn*. In this case, Huck is the narrator of his own tale, as opposed to merely a player in Tom's. In a Bakhtinian analysis of the two texts, Paul Lynch suggests the most pivotal change comes from Twain's choice to narrate *Huckleberry Finn* from Huck's first-person point of view, allowing "Huck to be a different kind of hero, and one that is ultimately more compelling" (173). While I develop this idea further in Chapter Four, Lynch's drawing of similarities between Tom and Huck help inform the idea of interchangeability—both are "able" to take the lead position. At the same time, Lynch recognizes Huck's role in *Tom Sawyer*. Huck "only" has the authority to rehash what has been stated, what Lynch recognizes as Michael Holquist's description of "internally-persuasive discourse" (173-74). Within the confines of *Tom Sawyer*, then, Tom is the clear hero. Furthering the notion of interchangeability is Huck's choice to listen to Tom's questionable advice late in the narrative of *Huckleberry Finn*, an act Daniel Davis Wood calls "heartless" and "reckless" (Wood 83). Most interestingly for this dissertation is the fact that Tom and Huck serve each other interchangeably as the devil's advocate over the courses of their respective novels. This intellectual co-dependence fits firmly inside YA: part of growing up involves learning from one another, listening to counsel and choosing whom to listen to. In this way Huck exhibits an element of the voice of reason not found with Sancho or Arthur. Sancho's character is complex in the scope of the entirety of *Don Quixote*, but his role alongside Quixote is firmly situated. Quixote's haughty treatment of Sancho is typical of their static, one-way relationship. Arthur and The Tick have the same dynamic—regardless of Arthur's repeated wisdom or help, The Tick remains clueless. Conversely, Tom and Huck trade back and forth with each other.

The devil's advocate/voice of reason sidekick role works in conjunction with the narrative gateway to reveal select complexities in the hero's character. In this case, the sidekick is able to engage on the same plane as the hero as he or she challenges a possible course of action, or proposes a more advisable one. Arthur is The Tick's voice of reason, offering sound advice when The Tick's intuition and intentions seem ill-conceived (which they often are). Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer take that role even further as they trade back and forth, effectively taking turns offering contrary, engaging opinion. It is important to recognize how this role functions in later chapters, specifically when looking at Bean in *Ender's Shadow* and Shay in *Uglies* (in Chapter Four), as well as the sidekick-protagonists (in Chapter Five).

Role Three: Comic Relief

The sidekick as comic relief differs from the narrative gateway and devil's advocate sidekicks in that its function is not contingent to revealing part of the hero's character. Instead, it lives up to the expectations triggered by the usual definition: the comic relief sidekick is present to give the reader something humorous. This is a role very familiar to the modern consciousness, thanks to any number of famous comedic duo: Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Martin and Lewis, Ricardo and Ball, among many others. A more recent example of the straight-man/comic, hero/sidekick pairing can be found in the comedic partnership of Tina Fey and Amy Poehler—who often trade the two roles back and forth. Perhaps most notable are their memorable portrayals of Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton, respectively, during *Saturday Night Live*'s lampooning of the 2008 presidential election campaign (not to mention their recent two-year hosting of the Golden Globe awards). This straight-man/comic pairing occurs often in literature. For instance, Grumio in *The Taming of the Shrew* gives a hilarious performance as

Petruchio's servant, mishearing direction and abusing his fellow servants according to his master's whim. Another interesting version of this role is P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves. The quintessential valet embodies all things English while acting in stark contrast to (and often in disbelief of) his foppish master, Bertie Wooster. In this case, it seems that the roles of comic and "straight man" are reversed: the hero is the comic figure. After analyzing Jeeves here in more depth, I will next explore a notable YA example of the sidekick as comic relief: twelve of the thirteen dwarves (as well as Bilbo Baggins) from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Because the twelve dwarves that accompany Thorin in *The Hobbit* are almost narratively indistinguishable, I treat them collectively as a single sidekick.

Jeeves

The instance of Jeeves as comic relief is remarkable in that he is, as described by John Mortimer, the servant in a "master-servant relationship in which the servant is, inevitably, the master" (Mortimer x). Jeeves is the straight man in their comic duo; Wooster is the comic. In many ways, this almost disqualifies Jeeves as a sidekick, except that he would, in his impeccable devotion to duty and diligence, balk at such a suggestion. Additionally, while Wooster is the inherently more comic figure, he still commands the narrative and the social standing. The comedy, indeed, comes from Jeeves, but not from his figure of hilarity, rather from the exact opposite. As is the case in so many narratives, the reader sees Jeeves through the perspective of Wooster, disallowing an initially unbiased opinion of the valet. Yet it is through this on-going bias that the comedy emerges, as so much of it is based in Wooster's amazement at Jeeves' ability to fix nearly everything, from a nasty hangover (Wodehouse 222) to unwanted marital engagements (Wodehouse 240). Mortimer likens the Wooster-Jeeves duo to the inspiration

provided by the Don Quixote-Sancho Panza pairing, in that the servant shows more sense than the master (Mortimer x). In this way, it becomes clear that Jeeves also fulfills the “voice of reason” sidekick duties. “The Birth of Jeeves,” from the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, presents an interesting (and compelling) argument for Wodehouse’s choices regarding the creation of the master/servant scenario: a boarding school “ethos” that Wodehouse may have retained long after adulthood (Watson). When comparing the master-servant dynamic of Wooster and Jeeves to similar stories (Watson offers both *Don Quixote* and *The Pickwick Papers*), Wodehouse’s works are “schoolboy in a way [the others] are not: all sunny afternoons, famous poems flippantly quoted out of context, as boys do, practical jokes and late-night tuck” (Watson). This is what makes Jeeves such a great example of comic relief: the very nature of Wodehouse’s writing was meant to bring levity and humor to readers perhaps unaccustomed to finding it in similarly-themed stories.

More than anything, it often seems that Wodehouse’s comedy comes from Jeeves’ near-perfect prescience, as well as Wooster’s consistent inability to see his valet’s wisdom. In “Jeeves Takes Charge,” the short story chronicling Jeeves’ first few days on the job, Wooster must dispose of his uncle’s memoirs or else suffer the end of his marital engagement. That his uncle is also his benefactor complicates matters significantly. Jeeves (as he almost always does) provides the solution, protecting Wooster from his uncle, ensuring the memoir gets published, and guaranteeing the ill-advised engagement is called off (239). The best comedic note of the story comes from a suit Wooster initially insists on keeping, despite Jeeves’s advice on the contrary (225). Wooster begins to harbor some animosity towards Jeeves, citing his particular attachment to the suit, as well as his understanding that one shouldn’t give too much power to one’s valet

(224, 225). After Jeeves extricates Wooster from the debacle concerning the manuscript, as well as the engagement, Wooster awakes the next day to allow Jeeves, regarding the suit, to “give the bally thing away” (241). Jeeves responds that he had given it to “the under-gardener last night” (241). The delayed revelation of the punch-line is a classic piece of comedic timing, and Wodehouse lets Jeeves anticipate perfectly the preferred and eventual outcome to the scenario. Jeeves as comic relief is as complete as the thoroughness he takes in watching over Wooster.

The Dwarves

The comic relief found in *The Hobbit* does not come from the timing of a single, in-control sidekick, as is the case with Jeeves. Rather, it comes from a number of sources. The tone of the language of high fantasy, of which Tolkien was certainly a master, is not uniformly dignified and serious, but also sets the stage for occasional comic turns of playfulness and joviality. One of the more marked of such instances occurs early in the text, in a narrative retelling of how the famous hobbit Bullroarer cut off the head of a great goblin, sending it sailing “a hundred yards through the air” and into a rabbit-hole: “In this way the battle was won and the game of Golf invented at the same moment” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 17). This is also one of the few times Tolkien mentions something as out of place with Middle Earth as golf. Even the game of riddles between Bilbo and Gollum serves as a moment of lightness—regardless of the fact that those riddles are told “in the dark” (68). The small but significant role of comedy in *The Hobbit* plays into Tolkien’s views on what he called the “eucatastrophe.” In his study on catastrophe vs. eucatastrophe, Christopher Toner defines Tolkien’s term as the “sudden turn in the story that, perhaps just for a moment, lets a gleam of final victory shine on a history of long defeat” (81). Much of the catharses found in reading Tolkien’s texts rely heavily upon this hope of

overcoming certain defeat, especially in the more heavy-hearted narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. On a much smaller scale, the presence of comedy in *The Hobbit* helps support the “gleam of final victory” that occurs after the book’s final battle. According to Christopher Garbowski’s article on comedy’s role in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien believed that “joy is the proper end of the fairy tale, or fantasy” (275). This certainly pertains to both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

As the titular protagonist, Bilbo does not need/warrant a sidekick. In fact, a strong case can be made that Bilbo is not the hero of the adventure. Instead, he is incorporated into Thorin’s company of thirteen dwarves. In many ways, then, Bilbo and Thorin’s company serve as sidekicks to Thorin. Yet considering Thorin’s repeated and on-going disdain for Bilbo, it is hard to call Bilbo his sidekick. Crafted to embody so much of what it meant to be English in the early 20th century, Bilbo’s personality creates the opportunity for comedic tension when the dwarves disturb the meticulous balance of his everyday life. The dwarves as a group are a core comic element in *The Hobbit*. Without the inherent chaos stemming from fourteen strong-minded characters embarking on a quest (fifteen, when Gandalf is with them), there would be considerably fewer opportunities for comedy. Also, without the dwarves, the presence of eucatastrophe would surely be lessened, eucatastrophe being so necessary to balance their tragic fates: it is Bilbo’s return home after the death of so many dwarves (including Thorin) that brings the proper, joyful end. Any number of passages would serve to illustrate this comic relief, but I need look no further than the dwarves’ introductions to Bilbo and Beorn.

The first introduction, to Bilbo, acts doubly as comic relief as it upsets Bilbo’s pleasant, simple existence as well as showcases the beyond-boisterous behavior of the twelve “sidekick”

dwarves. The first dwarf to knock on the unsuspecting hobbit's door is Dwalin, who enters "uninvited" and "without a word of explanation" (7). Bilbo's notice of Dwalin's omission of social convention speaks to his incredulity regarding such behavior. Balin, who comes next, acts similarly to his brother Dwalin: "he too hopped inside as soon as the door was open, just as if he had been invited" (7). Bilbo recovers himself enough to provide the brothers proper tea and refreshments. His next thought proves to be one of the best set-ups for a joke in the novel: "He had a horrible thought that the cakes might run short, and then he—as the host: he knew his duty and stuck to it however painful—he might have to go without" (8). That Bilbo might run out of cakes to serve his guests, and subsequently leave him with none, compounds the nature of hospitality with the dietary habits of average hobbits: they eat a lot, and often. The punch-line comes with three more waves of arrival: first by Kili and Fili, then by Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, and Gloin, and finally with Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Thorin, and Gandalf (8-10). If two dwarves threatened the supply of cake, what then would six times as many house-guests do to the precious larder?

The narration helps establish the level of incredulity felt by Bilbo. When Dori, Nori, Ori, Oin, and Gloin arrive, the narrative states, "It was not four after all, it was FIVE" (9). The font change denotes both a feeling of surprise and a feeling of dread—what would Bilbo do with nine dwarves? This, of course, heightens even further with the arrival of the remaining four dwarves and Gandalf (10). This final group enters by falling inside, "one on top of the other" due to Bilbo's abrupt and unexpected opening of the door (10). This is part of the way Tolkien uses comedy to cleverly address the needs of a YA audience. If such readers do not pick up on the social ridiculousness of over a dozen unexpected dinner guests, then they would certainly react

to a moment of unabashed slap-stick. This coincides with Cart's analysis of first-person adolescent narrators. In *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, Cart calls it "zany, wisecracking, adolescent humor" (60). The physical comedy of the dwarves exists in the same vein—even more so if one remembers that the true original audience for the book was Tolkien's own children. The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, by contrast, was intended from the start for an adult reading public. This difference can be seen even more clearly when looking at the Peter Jackson-directed film versions of Tolkien's novels. *The Hobbit* films have a significant amount of slapstick humor, where *The Lord of the Rings* films have but a few instances.

The dwarves' introduction to Beorn, occurring some 100 pages later in the novel, is another one of these moments of physical humor. Much of the lightness of this scene comes from Gandalf's sly handling of the situation rather than from the dwarves themselves. Gandalf forebodingly tells the dwarves ahead of time about Beorn's temperament, that they should be "careful not to annoy him," and that he "can be appalling when he is angry" (114). He introduces his plan to introduce them two at a time, "slowly" (114). During the introduction, Gandalf tells Beorn of their recent exploits with the goblins of the mountains as pair after pair of dwarves arrives. The arrival of Dwalin and Balin strike him as funny, causing Beorn to stop "frowning" and to "burst into a chuckling laugh; they looked so comical" (121). Beorn even vocalizes his opinion of their appearance, calling them "a fine comic [troop]" (121). Tolkien also remarks on Bombur's physical appearance, citing the fact that he was "fat" as a reason for his shortness of breath during his arrival (123). The frequent interruptions caused by the comic dwarves make Beorn "more interested in the story," a gambit that "kept him from sending the dwarves off at once like suspicious beggars" (123).

In the end, the question is not whether or not the dwarves are comedic—it is clear that they are. The question is, then, what is the connection between their comedy and their roles as sidekicks? This question finds its answer in the actions and treatment of Thorin, the leader of the company, and the novel's tragic hero. Thorin is not allowed to be funny—at least, not in the same way as his kinsmen. Thorin arrives at Bilbo's door at the bottom of the dog-pile of dwarves, a situation less than ideal for a celebrated leader, especially considering how Bifur, Bofur, and the “immensely fat and heavy” Bombur sprawled on top of him (10). Tolkien's introductory description of Thorin calls him “enormously important” and “great,” as well as “not at all pleased” and “very haughty” (10). The other twelve get nearly nothing in the way of an initial personality description (the exception being Dwalin and Balin, the brothers, who talk “like old friends” [8]). In fact, there is very little to differentiate the twelve followers of Thorin, except perhaps Bombur, distinguished among even dwarves for being, “immensely fat and heavy.”

As Thorin does not have occasion to be humorous, the sidekicks do it for him and provide levity where it might not otherwise occur. The comic actions that help gain Beorn's help come from the troop of dwarves, not from Thorin. Thorin arrives first, after Gandalf and Bilbo. There is nothing markedly comic about his introduction to Beorn. In fact, another thing setting Thorin apart from his sidekicks is Beorn's knowledge of his parentage: “Thorin (son of Thrain, son of Thrór, I believe)” (119). This moment of recognition builds the case for Thorin's importance even more, considering Beorn claimed never to have heard of Gandalf only moments before. (Such a remark means little in the context of *The Hobbit*, but in the greater context of Middle-Earth's mythology, it is certainly notable to have heard of a dwarf and not to have heard of a higher-level being of immense power and immortality like Gandalf.) Thorin's somber nature

finds itself felt all the more potently by its contrast to the joviality of the twelve, again in line with Tolkien's application of eucatastrophe.

Were it not for the comedy provided by the company (Bilbo included, when and where the story allows), *The Hobbit* would hold much more serious overtones. As it stands, regardless of the inclusions of mortal danger, death, and war, *The Hobbit* comes across tamely when compared to its sequel(s), *The Lord of the Rings*. Much of this strong tonal dichotomy can be attributed to the lightness brought into the story by the physical comedy of the sidekick dwarves—a comedy very much removed from the always-in-control seriousness of Wodehouse's Jeeves. In his own way, however, Jeeves brings relief through the resolution to the absurd social complications Wooster continually finds himself embroiled in. In both Tolkien and Wodehouse, the sidekick exhibits significant comic relief by highlighting, not taking away from, the seriousness inherent in the hero's more elevated social status. In one sense, this suggests further denigration on the part of the sidekick, and some of that is indeed true. In Chapter Three, this issue of relative social denigration comes up again when I analyze the character Neville Longbottom from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series: Neville, I will argue, begins as a definitive example of comic relief, but grows into a very different role by the end of the series.

Role Four: Intellectual Foil

Sidekicks can often also function as something of an “intellectual” foil for the protagonist: the fourth and hardest sidekick role to define. I have found that the difference between a foil and a sidekick can often blur, leading me to question how long a sidekick can act as a foil before he or she can no longer be considered a sidekick (a consideration I further develop in Chapter Five). The sidekick as intellectual foil presents a difficulty, almost a paradox,

in definition: to be considered a foil, the character must show a recognizable contrast to the protagonist, so as to better highlight the strengths, failings, and/or intrigue of the hero. (The use of “foil” in this sense harkens back to the practice of using foil as a contrasting backing for precious gems, setting off the brilliance of the stone.) This contrast is often within the context of an equal playing field, “characteristically” speaking. The sidekick, on the other hand, often languishes in a subsidiary capacity (as established in the Introduction)—hence the paradox at play here. Hal Foster’s Prince Valiant and Sir Gawain certainly fit the mold of hero and foil/sidekick; they even alternate between the roles over the comic’s ongoing, nearly eighty-year run. A more recent pop-culture example comes from the American version of *The Office*, as everyman-hero Jim Halpert puts up with the absurdities of his counterpart Dwight Schrute.

From literature, Horatio in *Hamlet* is a classic introductory example of this foil/sidekick quandary. Horatio is the closest thing Hamlet has to a sidekick, mainly because of their “intimate” friendship, but also because of their differences (Greenblatt 1687). Buchanan even considers Horatio a “surrogate” for Hamlet (17). Fortinbras and Laertes, the other readily-identifiable foils to Hamlet, lack the necessary relationship with the protagonist to be considered sidekicks—not to mention their antagonistic tendencies (Greenblatt 1688-89). Moreover, given how the entire play revolves around whether and how the melancholy Hamlet can and will define his own character, almost every other character in *Hamlet* can be read as a humoral foil, even the choleric Fortinbras, who only lurks offstage. A character like Samwise Gamgee of *The Lord of the Rings* similarly falls into this Horatio-like pattern of the foil/sidekick. Within YA, I look at Vetch from Ursula Le Guin’s *A Wizard of Earthsea*, as an even clearer example of a sidekick who serves as a foil to the hero.

Samwise Gamgee

While YA has often claimed J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as its own (and will continue to do so), I consider it here as a work of adult fiction, for if anything it bridges the gap nicely between YA and more "standard" adult novels. Betty Carter cites the phenomenon of middle school-aged boys often reading adult "quest fantasy" in preference over more pointedly YA fare (63). Considering *The Hobbit*'s position as prelude to *The Lord of the Rings*, the transition from one to the other by young adults is simply a logical one. The four major hobbits of the *Lord of the Rings* help bridge this gap further, as they represent a young demographic of hobbits. Frodo Baggins comes of age in the opening chapters of the saga. When he leaves on his quest, he is accompanied by Meriadoc Brandybuck, Peregrin Took, and Samwise Gamgee—all of whom are (for all intents and purposes) the same approximate age. Samwise, or Sam, is clearly Frodo's sidekick, as he dutifully follows him through the perils they face to destroy the One Ring. Sam offers moments of both disagreement and clarity in his back-and-forth with Frodo, but never quite falls into a devil's advocate role—his position in the social hierarchy of hobbits is far too entrenched to allow him the status to question Frodo in this manner. Robin Robertson describes Sam's status as "a simple gardener, born into this lower strata of society as generations before him had been" (227). Furthermore, Robertson thinks it "unthinkable for Sam to consider himself Frodo's equal" (227). Sam's inability, or refusal, to consider himself Frodo's peer comes up again and again. Any comedic moments involving Sam do not add up to enough comic relief to define him as such—there is far too much drama involved in the later parts of their quest. The best fit for someone like Sam, then, is this fourth and final role of foil.

Sam proves his worth as a foil near the end of *The Two Towers*, book two of the trilogy. Believing Frodo has been killed by the immense spider Shelob, Sam faces a dilemma. Part of him wants to end his own life and travel with Frodo wherever he may now be going. Another part desires to stay and wait until the two of them are discovered, and thus end it all. But a third part wins out over all: to act as the final remaining member of the Fellowship and finish the job with which they were entrusted. In the face of this knowledge, Sam's inner turmoil is revealed, "You are the last of all the Company . . . Why am I left all alone to make up my mind? I am sure to go wrong" (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 433). Regardless of his own misgivings concerning his judgment or decision-making, Sam takes the One Ring from Frodo's neck. Putting it on his own neck, he feels both the responsibility of the mission and the physical manifestation of the Ring's influence upon him:

His head was bowed to the ground with the weight of the Ring, as if a great stone had been strung on him. But slowly, as if the weight became less, or new strength grew in him, he raised his head, and then with a great effort got to his feet and found that he could walk and bear his burden. (434)

It is the placing of the Ring on his own neck and subsequently placing himself under its influence, that moves Sam into a position of similarity with Frodo. While he only carries the Ring for a short time (he soon finds the revived Frodo and returns it), it qualifies him, in the end, to be considered a ring-bearer. Robertson describes Sam's actions as "stepping beyond the limits of his class, of what someone like him is capable of being" (239). Sam, therefore, eclipses his gardener status and shows fortitude comparable to Frodo's as a ring-bearer. Sam-as-foil comes into play as he, a lowly gardener, can exhibit similar traits to the "master of the finest house in

Hobbiton” (Robertson 227). All ring-bearers are given the option to leave Middle Earth and sail across the sea, as Frodo explains: “You too were a Ring-bearer, if only for a little while. Your time may come” (Tolkien, *Return of the King* 382).

In this way also, Sam proves himself to be the true fulfillment of the quest. Carrying the Ring has damaged Frodo too completely for him to find rest and peace in Middle-Earth. Sam, on the other hand, finds himself able to embrace the life they once led—he marries and has children. His progeny are the innocents for whom the Fellowship embarked upon their mission to destroy the ancient evil of Sauron once and for all. The wish was once for all five hobbits connected to the Ring to return and live their lives normally once more. The two non-ring-bearers, Merry and Pippin, move into this life easily. Bilbo and Frodo, each carriers of the Ring for a significant time and significant purpose, cannot forget it, nor its influence. Sam bridges both sets of possibility and brings the overarching story to completion. He carried the Ring, but falls back into life in the Shire with love and enthusiasm. It is not for many years that the decision falls to Sam. At the age of 102, after his wife passes away, Sam settles his affairs and travels west, where according to tradition, he “went to the Grey Havens, and passed over Sea, last of the Ring-Bearers” (Tolkien, *Return of the King* 472). In this way, Sam’s fate shows “the brilliance” of what Frodo’s fate could not bring. Frodo, as the hero, needed to remove himself from a world no longer able to sustain him. Sam embraces that possibility, finding solace in the soil, his family, and the world he helped save.

Vetch

The fact that Vetch barely qualifies as Ged’s sidekick at all makes his example a suitable counterpart to the foil established by Sam. Most of the adventures Ged experiences throughout

Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* are undertaken on his own. He encounters other people, certainly, but none travel with him throughout the story's arc. It is the book's major theme, what Peter Hollindale describes as its "preoccupation with death," that at last elicits Ged's need for something more than a passing companion (184). As he sets out to encounter what seems to be his certain end, fittingly near the end of the novel, Ged brings Vetch with him. Vetch is the only logical choice considering their long-established friendship. The older of the two (181, 182), Vetch begins that friendship with Ged while they were still students in the wizarding school on the island of Roke:

Vetch had been three years at the School, and soon would be made Sorcerer; he thought no more of performing the lesser arts of magic than a bird thinks of flying. Yet a greater, unlearned skill he possessed, which was the art of kindness. That night, and always from then on, he offered and gave Ged friendship, a sure and open friendship which Ged could not help but return. (54)

The fact that Vetch was older, and was already on his way to achieving the next class of magic mastery, makes little difference in their friendship, neither at first nor later on. After Ged spends the required year studying the true names of things (without which no true magic could be woven [61]), he returns to the main school to find Vetch a full sorcerer, "but that set no barrier between them" (62). Ged's ambition allows him to lead Vetch, if it can be called leading, when they interact with the other students during their time on Roke. This dynamic, like all other relationships in Ged's life, changes when he calls forth the shadow: it puts him in a coma-like state for weeks, undermines his confidence for years, and eventuates the great quest he undertakes.

After Ged wakes from his first encounter with the shadow, Vetch comes to him to say goodbye; Vetch has gained his wizard's staff and must go out in to the world. Vetch restores Ged's confidence, telling him "I see before you, not rooms and books, but far seas, and the fire of dragons, and the towers of cities, and all such things a hawk sees when he flies far and high" (83). When he leaves, Vetch entreats Ged to visit him in the East, to "send for [him]" by his true name: Estarriol (83). Vetch's revelation of his true name gives Ged also "the proof of unshaken, unshakeable trust" (84). Without this revelation, it is possible Ged's sense of self would not have recovered enough to accomplish anything. In their analysis of Le Guin's use of names, naming, and Jungian psychology in the *Earthsea* books, Craig and Diana Barrow call this gift the "provisional independence" necessary to overcome the shadow, the "darker part of himself" (28).

In many ways, then, Vetch is more of an older brother, a helper in the way of the archetypal wizened old man (Campbell 72). In this manner, he also can be considered a foil. Where Ged was once headstrong, Vetch was always patient. Where Ged was foolhardy and proud, Vetch was kind and good at listening. While Ged released the shadow through a dangerous act of uncontrolled magic, Vetch studied diligently. Ged spent the better part of a year recuperating from his foolishness; Vetch graduated and moved on. They do share some similarities beyond their ability to use magic, however: they are both from poor villages, both from islands from the eastern part of the known world, and both represent a younger demographic within the students at Roke. However, when Ged nears the end of his quest to confront his shadow, the older brother dynamic changes. Vetch recognizes that it is Ged's quest, and offers, nay insists, that he accompany him (178). Ged accepts. While on the quest together, Ged is the hero (almost by default, considering only he can confront the shadow, as the two are

linked). Vetch accompanies in a support position, both to bolster Ged's moral as well as to know the outcome of the quest—good or bad—in order to either immortalize the deed in song or to warn the world of the shadow's evil (178).

While Vetch is not as powerful a wizard as Ged (197), he is also not reliant upon him for saving him from enemies—he has his own formidable skills. Again, Vetch is older than Ged—there is no need for him to look to Ged for guidance or protection. It is also important to note how Vetch does not qualify as a sidekick in any of the other three typical roles: he is absent from too much of the story to help a reader understand Ged, he does not try to dissuade Ged from his quest or challenge him in any fashion, and there is almost nothing comical about the text at all. What sets Vetch apart, in the YA fashion, is when he embodies (as foil) a fully neutral position where he neither questions nor condemns Ged—he accepts him based on the friendship they forged during their boyhood, during their teenage years. He is what Horatio should have been to Hamlet, the friend and confidant that so many adolescents yearn for—and many never find. Ged, well past his adolescence in one way (he is a full wizard having faced dragons [102-109], ancient evil [133], and his own shadow [201]), is still a young man in others: he is only nineteen at the end of his quest (182). Furthermore, according to Jeanne Murray Walker, “Adolescents who read Ursula Le Guin's fantasy *A Wizard of Earthsea*, participate in Ged's symbolic transformation” (qtd. in Bruzelius 243). In the same sense, adolescents participating in Ged's transformation vicariously enjoy being in Vetch's confidence.

As someone so close to Ged, Vetch has insight into how Ged uses power—and really, has insight into him as a person. He was there when Ged released the shadow, an act Hollindale accurately calls opening “the door between life and death” (184). He saw the scars inflicted onto

Ged's face that night, and was the only student who tried to help when Ged was attacked (Le Guin, *Wizard* 76). Similarly, Vetch alone cared enough to come back to say goodbye when he was permitted to finally see Ged (82). In a word, Vetch is devoted. This devotion does not come lightly, nor does it leave lightly. If Ged were a wizard, mighty and powerful, and Vetch were his non-wizard follower, it would be easy for Vetch to cleave to the majesty put forth in front of him. However, because Vetch is always ahead of Ged in their studies (perhaps not in power, but certainly in years and experience), there is no awe to blind him with—he knows the darkness within Ged as well as he knows the darkness within himself. As Le Guin's novel explores the idea of inner darkness battling against inner lightness, it is not surprising that Vetch unassumingly assists Ged on his journey to confront his shadow-self, and this shows a devotion of a higher sort.

As the fourth, final, and most complex sidekick role, the sidekick-as-foil presents a challenge: the sidekick needs to provide contrast to the hero in order to better illuminate him or her. In doing so, however, the sidekick often comes close to becoming something more, something greater than a subservient companion. If a sidekick were to cross that line, he or she would cease to be a sidekick—hence the difficulty. This is perhaps why Sam holds himself unquestionably to be Frodo's servant. Part of this is his nature; part of this is his place in hobbit-social hierarchy. Vetch allows himself to become Ged's sidekick because he honors their friendship and recognizes the importance of the quest. Recognizing this delicate balance between sidekick and “something more” comes into fruition in Chapter Five, when I examine a number of texts told from a superhero sidekick's point of view (this makes the sidekicks the protagonists

and narrators, and in these examples, almost all question the integrity of the superheroes they follow).

One of the difficulties in pigeon-holing sidekicks into only four definitional roles comes from the changing nature of literary works. Authors will continue to look for ways to stretch their media and find new ways to tell stories. It is also a difficult task to choose only one of the four roles for many sidekicks, since the roles do not only overlap, but they can shift, especially for sidekicks who appear in extended storylines. For example, Samwise Gamgee does delve at appropriate times into the roles of comic relief and devil's advocate: some comedy comes early on in the trilogy, and then the devil's advocate palpably arrives as the Ring takes hold of Frodo and the two find themselves at odds. The advantage in using "only" four roles, then, is to establish a definable starting-place for future conversations—and this dissertation—to build upon. A deeper structuralist study could be performed to more completely define the different kinds of sidekick roles, which in turn would undoubtedly lead to a post-structuralist challenge to those roles, and so on.

However, it is not difficult to recognize, as this chapter has tried to show, that sidekicks are very numerous in adult literature, both early and contemporary; in comic books, among other popular forms; and in YA, and that sidekicks can be usefully differentiated into several discrete types. In turn, these sidekick character types relate in critically relevant ways to the wider purposes of the narratives in which they occur. Chapter Two complements the literary-historical and critical orientations of Chapter One by exploring, in a more thematic vein, two other essential ways in which heroes and sidekicks must interact: both within the duologies of gender-specific standpoints, and also in the light of specific family relationships. Subsequently, Chapters

Three through Five will delineate how the canon of YA texts in particular seems especially adept at challenging and complicating these various critical and thematic characteristics of the sidekick.

CHAPTER TWO

FAMILY TIES

Beyond the narrative role a sidekick plays relative to the hero, as explored in Chapter One, another foundational component of the hero/sidekick relationship is the particular nature of the bond that forms between the two. This chapter will explore how that relationship is quite often imagined as a familial one. While a sidekick can embody a certain role in terms of how he or she interacts with his or her hero, the entirety of the relationship does not rely upon whether or not a sidekick is a narrative gateway, devil's advocate, comic relief, or foil. Just as there are innumerable ways two people can interact within a relationship, so too are the relational possibilities between a hero and his or her sidekick. Nikolajeva for instance explores the many varieties of relationships that can occur between characters, both for reasons of plot and for formations of a protagonist(s) (67-87). Nevertheless, the hero/sidekick bond too is often drawn into one of several very "familiar" channels—and some more often than not are in fact those that mimic familial relations. When heroes and sidekicks forge platonic bonds, they tend to simulate those of parents and children or those of two siblings.

It is interesting—and indeed prototypical—that many YA sidekicks come from an unstable, broken, or non-existent family situation. In his book *Humor in Young Adult Literature: A Time to Laugh*, Walter Hogan notes that "separation from parents and family is a major theme of adolescence" (1). Furthermore, Hogan makes the case that perhaps "families in which one parent has died prematurely may be overrepresented in YA literature," and that there are "literally thousands of YA novels in which the protagonist's parents are divorced" (2). Hogan continues by citing title after title of YA novels in which one or both parents are absent for one

reason or another. In light of this foundational element of YA, I believe a YA sidekick often aligns him- or herself with a hero—or vice versa, notably—in order to fulfill a need for family. I agree with the contention that using a broken family unit as a starting place allows a YA author to tap into a reader’s recognition that adulthood requires independence, typically apart from (or in spite of) one’s parental units. Trites offers a psychoanalytical approach to understanding how YA uses parental figures: *in parentis*, *in loco parentis*, and *in logo parentis* (*Disturbing the Universe*, 58-69). Nikolajeva applies Trites’s work by using these three possibilities in her book chapter on secondary characters (Nikolajeva 110-27). She states that the first, *in parentis*, or the presence of biological parents, is “a rare case in children’s fiction” (117). She furthermore agrees with Trites that the fact of whether or not a character has biological parents is a way to differentiate between children’s literature and young adult literature (119). The third, *in logo parentis*, or “parents made out of words,” governs a scenario when characters create “a substitute parent in their imagination” (118). The second, *in loco parentis*, or “instead of parents,” is the “most common” scenario and is the one that applies here (118). Moreover, the way a hero and sidekick develop this surrogate relationship almost always culminates in a reinforcement of the parental gap. Through their friendship, there are two basic archetypal means for YA heroes and sidekicks to fill that familial breach: by creating a duplicate parent-child bond, or by being virtual siblings, and becoming a little family generation of their own.

To illustrate how *in loco parentis* or this “need for family” occurs, I will break the two familial categorizations down into their eight gender-specific possibilities. I begin by showing how Bruce Wayne (Batman) and Dick Grayson (Robin) embody the father-son relationship. Batman and Robin can also illustrate the father-daughter relationship when considering Carrie

Kelly as Robin in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*. Helen and Violet Parr from Pixar's *The Incredibles* embody the mother-daughter, while Lady Jessica and Paul Atreides from Frank Herbert's science fiction classic *Dune* are the mother-son (literally, in these cases). To show how heroes and sidekicks create sibling bonds, I use S. E. Hinton's Ponyboy and Johnny from *The Outsiders* to illustrate the brother-brother scenario (I also briefly revisit pairs studied in Chapter One: Frodo and Sam, Ged and Vetch). While similar to Ponyboy and Johnny in some regards, I use Nancy Drew and George Fayne/Bess Marvin as a sister-sister sidekick relationship.

The sister-brother (or brother-sister) relationship can become more complicated, depending on the ages of those involved, and whether or not the relationship remains platonic. For instance, I show Jennifer Strange and Tiger Prawns from Jasper Fforde's *The Chronicles of Kazaam* series as the illustration for the older hero (sister) and younger sidekick (brother) scenario. However, if both are of a similar age, or both nearing adolescence, as in the case of Alanna and Jonathan from Tamora Pierce's *Song of the Lioness* series, the relationship lends itself to romantic tension. Romantic or sexual tension is often not resolved in the first book of a continuing series. In fact, it is usually only dimly introduced or hinted at. For the purposes of this chapter, the introduction, recognition, and consideration of romantic/sexual tension will suffice. However, as nascent sexual tension is an important part of the adolescent experience—and therefore plays an important part in YA fiction—additional analysis of the development and repercussions of such a relationship presents rich possibilities for future research.

Finally, I consider a ninth intriguing permutation, when the presence of two sidekicks complicates matters even further by the creation of what I call the hero/sidekick triad, similar in some respects to what Nikolajeva calls the “collective protagonist” (67). The triad does some

interesting things to the family dynamic, especially when it involves either the ever-popular love triangle or a shifting of who is hero and who are sidekicks. Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ron Weasley are an easily recognizable example to showcase both instances: readers waited in anticipation to see who Hermione would choose romantically, and their mutually evolving friendship as a trio over seven books supplants the typical hero/sidekick pairing. For reasons I explain later, I instead use Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase, and Grover Underwood from Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series to show the possibilities of the triad. (I disqualify George Fayne and Bess Marvin from consideration as part of a hero triad because they are essentially two interchangeable halves of a single sidekick, or occupying what Nikolajeva calls "identical actantial positions" [84].)

Recognizing the establishment of a family dynamic between a hero and sidekick lets me begin to break that dynamic apart in later chapters. Part of how YA portrays the maturation of its characters is the acknowledgement that they must stand alone someday, without the aid of their parent or parents. This is especially true when the hero has an established familial relationship, whether actual or metaphorical, with his or her sidekick. If and when sidekicks evolve beyond the need for—or the influence of—their heroes, the familial relationships also change (the aforementioned return to a "parental gap"). Outside of the YA arena, sidekicks often function without need for change or independence. Even Watson, who eventually marries and moves out of Baker Street, still pines for and cavorts with Holmes to solve cases—and his role as narrative gateway hardly changes. When the adolescent sidekick comes into his or her own, however, the connection between sidekick and hero must change accordingly. This chapter fleshes out the roles presented in Chapter One by building up these familial connections. Later chapters will

show distinct ways these roles and connections change when a YA sidekick comes into his or her own.

Father-Son

As I stated in the Introduction, Batman and Robin might just qualify as the indisputable comic book hero/sidekick pairing, since they have been a perennial influence in popular culture almost since their creation. Batman was intentionally designed to take advantage of the success of Superman, giving DC another costumed superhero (Wright 16). On his own, Robin is somewhat less derivative as he “stands as the first sidekick and can also be considered the first kid superhero” (Coogan 200). Robin looks to Batman for guidance, education, and livelihood. As a father figure to Robin, Batman fulfills his latent need to procreate, especially given Bruce Wayne’s famous status as an orphan and the sole heir to the family fortune. (Batman eventually *does* procreate, allowing for a father-as-hero/son-as-sidekick situation where Bruce Wayne’s son Damien takes on the role of Robin.)

Robin “the Boy Wonder” was created in 1940 as a “character with whom young readers could supposedly identify,” and there have been at least ten distinct characters acting as Batman’s sidekick (Wright 17; McLauchlin). Dick Grayson is the first and most famous. Dick initially existed as a narrative gateway for younger readers to identify with Batman’s adventures, which essentially pigeon-holed him for over twenty years. Writers of the series kept him at age thirteen (at most) until the formation of The Teen Titans in 1965 (Coogan 213). He was allowed to age in real-time for the next five years until he started college in 1969—when he should have been well over forty years old, if not pushing fifty. Coogan points out that Dick stopped aging somewhere in his mid-twenties, adhering to the maxim that “no superhero or major supporting

cast member seems to have aged since about 1978” (214). There are exceptions to this rule, however, as specialized titles, story-lines, and single shot comics are released regularly, although they often exist outside of the canonical comic-book “continuity.”

In light of the seventy-five year history of Robin (as Dick Grayson or otherwise), I have chosen to study Dick Grayson as he appears in *Batman: The Animated Series* from 1992. This series has been hailed as one of the more successful and influential chapters of the Batman mythos. Mark Waid, author of the celebrated graphic novel *Kingdom Come*, called the series “electrifying . . . unlike anything else we’d ever seen on TV before, and that’s what made it so compelling” (“Batman”). Waid calls “Heart of Ice,” one of the series’ stories, “easily one of the best Batman stories ever told” (“Batman”). The series showcases a clean and strong animation design intended to bring Batman back to his roots: dark, brooding (dare I say, gothic) amidst a clear 1930s/1940s Hollywood-gangster motif. (The creators/producers called it “dark-deco.”) It is never stated that the series takes place in the years before World War II, and this would be clearly anachronistic given the kinds of technology used throughout the series. However, the architecture, automobiles, firearms, and fashion sense are clearly nostalgic. Waid calls *Batman: The Animated Series* an “important marker in Batman’s history” because it influenced much of the Batman stories that came after it, which becomes all the more apparent when contrasting previous television Batman series like the 1960s Adam West “Batman,” or the continued campiness of Hannah-Barbara’s cartoon *Superfriends*, ca. 1973 (“Batman”).

Even though he is not in every episode of *Batman: The Animated Series*, Dick Grayson gets considerable screen time and backstory. As a consequence, his relationship with Batman has room to grow and develop in a relatively condensed period: a handful of episodes in this instance

as opposed to seventy-five years in print. In the documentary-featurette “Robin Rising,” the creative team behind the series explains the decision-making process behind their particular portrayal of Dick Grayson—part of which took its cue from the work of Batman writer/artist Neil Adams. The choice to make Bruce a father-figure is quite deliberate, and makes sense; Dick, like Bruce, loses his parents at the hand of a lowly gangster. Another important choice is to place Dick in college. Several reasons went into this choice, including explaining Dick’s absence in some episodes and moving away from the child-like behavior of a younger Robin: “it was a hard and fast effort to toughen him up a bit. . . a strength of his own” (“Robin”). Putting Dick in college strongly connects to the YA mentality, even though he might be older than some YA readers/viewers. Dick is at a crossroads in the series: he comes into his own and begins to question Bruce—he’s “on an emotional journey” (“Robin”). Dick leaves Bruce in the same way that a college graduate is expected to strike out on his or her own after graduation. The series eventually sees Dick “growing” into a solitary crime fighter, Nightwing. Dick arrives at a moment of independence when he becomes Nightwing, and also returns to the basic YA structural characterization, namely a position of parentless-ness. This return includes an emboldened questioning of Batman’s methods and ethics in his crusade on crime, a shift in perspective that I develop further in Chapter Five.

Father-Daughter

If Dick Grayson shows how a surrogate child can eventually leave a father, then studying Batman’s relationship with Carrie Kelly shows how a child can stay. Reynolds’ take on Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns* states that Miller takes the “familiar and received ingredients” of what makes a Batman story and “radically restructures their meaning” (100). Nathan Tipton

similarly views Carrie as “an interesting, if ultimately failed, experiment,” in this case as a way for Miller to explore a “gender troubling of Robin” (334). In Miller’s text, Robin becomes a thirteen-year-old girl—a far cry from an angst-ridden college-aged Dick Grayson. Carrie certainly fits the mold of a Robin. Her parents are still alive, but are so concerned about reliving the glory days of the sixties—and doing drugs—that they hardly notice Carrie at all. At one point, while Carrie clings to the back of the Batmobile mowing down crowds of rowdy “mutants,” her parents have this conversation: “great dinner, hon.” “thanks, babe.” “hey. . . . didn’t we have a kid?” (Miller 76). That night, Carrie is brought into the fold as the new Robin and her parents are never mentioned nor shown again. Another requirement Carrie fulfills is a background with gymnastics, which she mentions twice (Miller 60, 145; Tipton 330). The father-daughter relationship between Bruce Wayne and Carrie is significantly different than Bruce’s father-son relationship with Dick. Firstly, Bruce is pushing fifty at this point, old enough to be Carrie’s biological grandfather (although it would be a close generational separation). Secondly, Carrie proactively joins Batman by putting herself in harm’s way for his sake before even knowing him. Thirdly, Miller’s text only covers a matter of weeks, at most. The relationship is forged during a baptism of fire when Batman fights the leader of the mutant gang in the city dump.

Throughout the fight, Batman holds an inner monologue addressed to Dick, reminiscing about their past, and about how Dick is not in the seat next to him. Batman finds himself physically outmatched. As he begins to pass out from his injuries, he silently asks, “. . . where. . . are you . . . Dick . . . you were always . . . my little monkey wrench. . . .” (82). Carrie leaps forward to stop the mutant leader from using a crowbar on Batman’s head. Delirious, Batman

sees her as Robin (she is in costume) and saves them both by throwing a smoke-bomb in the leader's face. Before passing out, he says softly, "... Dick ..." (83). Considering he is in shock, Batman likely believes this Robin *is* Dick Grayson, come back to save him or to be saved, depending on which point of view is taken. Batman's inner thoughts regarding Dick (and later Carrie) place Carrie in an odd devil's advocate role: he sees danger differently when she accompanies him. Carrie, like Dick before her, fulfills Batman's latent desire for a child.

Joining Batman is the end of Carrie's search for a father figure. She introduces herself as "Carrie. Carrie Kelly" in one frame, only to revise herself in the next: "Robin," with a determined and somewhat pleading look in her expression (85). The connection is cemented a few pages later when Bruce puts his hand on her shoulder and she joyfully leaps into his arms (92). Part of this connection can be attributed to a kind of Florence-Nightingale syndrome, stemming from how Batman saved Carrie earlier in the text (30, 31, 34). He saved her life and she feels involved with his fate, which is why she decided to suit up as Robin in the first place. Batman sees her skills, "young," "smart," "brave," proven beyond doubt in the coming pages (92).

Carrie's motivation for "adopting" Batman as her father figure is love—there is not another or better word for it. An interesting moment illustrating this love occurs when Alfred picks Carrie up from school. She looks his way with an expectant smile on her face and runs to the car like an impatient lover, or in this case, a giddy daughter (121). While Dick joined Bruce (and I make the distinction between which side of Wayne's persona each joins with), he did so out of a desire to avenge his parents' murder—very akin to Bruce's own mission. Carrie, however, owes her life to *the Batman*. Whether her motivation comes more from inspiration or

from seeing him as a protective father-figure does not matter, as both are present. Batman further provides that protection through two life-or-death situations: pulling her away from an exploding building (116), and catching her when she could have fallen to her death (138). Love is perhaps the most powerful of sidekick motivations. What else would bring a thirteen-year-old to put herself in way of this kind of harm? The gravest instance of danger comes with the final showdown with the Joker. Batman and Robin arrive at the county fair to find the Joker has already killed dozens. Batman's inner voice talks to him: "Somewhere a woman calls out for her son . . . somewhere a calliope plays the same tune, again and again. . . .a tiny hand tightens its grip on my arm . . . a girl of thirteen breathes in sharply, suddenly, her innocence lost . . . it ends tonight, Joker." (140). The "girl of thirteen" is obviously Carrie, seeing dead peers for the first time. Furthermore, Carrie ends up very nearly choked to death by the Joker's henchman. After she is saved by a fortuitously placed piece of roller coaster track, Carrie is shown with a blank wide-eyed stare, tears streaming down her face, and snot from her nose (149).

From the hero's standpoint, Batman could not protect Carrie's innocence in the same way that parents cannot protect their children from growing up. Part of the shock present in Carrie's face almost certainly comes from her disbelief that Batman was not there to save her personally. The adopted father-figure failed her. Tipton believes this can partially be attributed to a lack of "a certain emotional connection between Bruce/Batman and Carrie/Robin" (333). From Batman's perspective, that might well be the case considering the brief time he has known Carrie. However, Tipton's thesis focuses on Robin as Miller's "connection to heteronormativity, and her appearances . . . coincide more and more frequently within scenes of overt homoeroticism" (331). Carrie's emotional devotion to Batman is obvious, whether or not Batman

feels more connected to a male Robin (which, as I stated in the Introduction, is a question to be examined in more depth later-on). That Batman had been accused of child endangerment is appropriate and true—and he wouldn't disagree, as he considers Carrie as a soldier taking part in a war (138, 93). It is possible that Batman could have worked harder to make Carrie's loss of innocence less traumatic, but what part of growing up is not traumatic? The pivotal moment in their father-daughter relationship comes when Batman calls for aid after dealing with the Joker—the panel shows the same Carrie, blank-faced and in shock (155). She comes out of it and answers, saving *him* in the end. The moment of disillusionment could have easily gone the other way, with Carrie choosing to walk away.

Their partnership is re-established as the graphic novel ends: Carrie is with Bruce in what was once the Batcave, helping him set up what comes next. They are the only two left of the “old guard,” which, of course, she is not really a part of as she is the link between the old and the new. Batman must rely upon her in his old age in ways he would not have needed to with Dick. Carrie is young enough to be his granddaughter, but she is the daughter of his old age—a fact further explored in the sequel, *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* (2001-02), as well as scrutinized by Tipton (327). Batman will always be an intriguing figure to study because of the way he willingly brings his surrogate children into harm's way (not to mention the never-ending potential to study him through a psychoanalytical lens). The absence of a second parental figure makes the nurturing of youth a difficult task for any single parent, much less one bent on stopping criminals or super-villains. Batman's task-oriented approach shows substantial differences when viewed against some hero-as-mother scenarios.

Mother-Daughter

In direct contrast to Batman's surrogate children, the mother-child pairings I study here include two examples of mothers and their biological offspring. In keeping with the search for familial stability, both examples are products of family instability or brokenness. The first is the mother-daughter example of Helen and Violet Parr from Pixar Studio's *The Incredibles* (2004). Pixar's cinematic record shows a collection of multi-layered films appealing to children, young adults, and adults alike, earning accolades as a "legendary studio" with an unprecedented "run of 11 amazing movies" (Corliss). *The Incredibles*, one of those first eleven, is no exception. The start of the film shows the Parr family at a time of unrest: each member of the family struggles in such a way as to parallel his or her powers. As a whole, the powers of the Parr family are a remixing of those of Fantastic Four (I am hardly the first to notice this parallel, see Cruz; "The Incredibles;" "What Inspired"). Bob Parr, as Mr. Incredible, has super strength and invulnerability (i.e., The Thing). Helen, as Elastigirl, can stretch her limbs and body (i.e., Mr. Fantastic). Daughter Violet can turn invisible and project shields (i.e., The Invisible Woman). Baby Jack-Jack is shown with the ability to change himself with a variety of powers, among them being covered in flames (i.e., Johnny Storm). Middle child Dash stands outside of the Fantastic Four model, but still has a classic superpower as he can run impossibly fast (i.e., The Flash). A series of escalating lawsuits sparks the systematic retirement of the superhero community, forcing them all into a form of witness protection. Bob is depressed as he has been rendered impotent in a demeaning insurance job. He largely ignores his family as a result, only finding solace in secretly reliving "the glory days" while Helen thinks he goes bowling. Helen struggles to maintain the family's precarious status quo, but Bob constantly undermines her

efforts. Violet's self-confidence issues make her socially invisible. A junior-high school student, Violet's thoughts remain on a popular boy at school—who presumably does not know she exists. He looks in her direction, but she turns invisible and he walks away. Nonetheless, she is thrilled he “looked at her.” Conversely, Dash wants to stand out and compete in track-and-field, but his parents will not allow it because of their need to remain anonymous. Although I focus on Helen and Violet, the Parr family's struggles are not exclusive to a hero/sidekick scenario. It is a story of a family with strong conflicting dynamics of individualism. Bob's gallivanting causes Helen to suspect an affair, which brings all but Jack Jack into a situation where they must gel as both a family and a superhero team.

My focal point is how Violet acts as her mother's sidekick. Violet and her mother have their first sidekick/hero moment when Helen, Violet, and Dash fly to the island where Bob has been locked up. When the movie's villain shoots missiles at the jet, Helen asks Violet to surround the jet with a force-field. Violet fails out of confusion at being asked to use the powers she has always been required to hide. Helen manages to save them, and they make it to the island. When they talk about it later, Helen tells Violet that it “wasn't fair of her to ask so much [of Violet].” Helen also leaves her with this thought: when the time comes for Violet to use her powers, “you'll know what to do, it's in your blood.” As Helen runs off to Bob, Violet considers her mother's words, puts on a superhero mask, and stands a little straighter. Helen's words come true later on, as Violet dives between Dash and a machine gun, saving them both by creating a force-field. As Dash asks her how she is doing that, she responds with “I do not know.” Just as her mother predicted, Violet's instincts took over and she acted without thinking. Her powers

end up being some of the most valuable: she saves Dash's life a number of times, frees the entire family from captivity, and participates in a significant way in the climactic battle.

Violet is the only member of the family who exists in a sidekick capacity—and that capacity is intimately linked to her relationship with her mother. Dash does not require affirmation—he is raring to go from the start and has to be reined in. Helen likewise does not need anyone's words of encouragement, although her marriage is reinforced by Bob's opening up about his feelings. In turn, Bob finds support in Helen's response to his confessions of love. As a junior high-school student, Violet represents any and all adolescents in a similar place in life. She is not Carrie Kelly, the self-assured, already-game-for-anything sidekick. She is timid, shy, and unsure about using her power invisibility and shielding powers, which themselves embody adolescent wishes. The confidence to do so comes from long-awaited affirmation from her mother. This appears to be in conflict with what Frances A. Nadeau cites as the “bond between mother and daughter as one inhibiting the daughter from establishing her own identity.” However, considering Helen's lack of attention is what inhibits her daughter's development, it makes sense that the inhibition is lifted once that attention is given. Helen's instinct to protect Violet from harm initially aggravates her daughter's consternation, but it is that same nurturing outlook (unlike Batman's warrior or soldierly outlook) that eventually enables Violet to come into her own.

Mother-Son

While Helen and Violet Parr showcase a somewhat straight forward mother-daughter relationship, my example for the mother-son presents a more complicated study. My choice comes from Frank Herbert's science fiction opus, *Dune*. (*Dune* falls into that nebulous category

of adult books-read-by-teens: NPR ranked it as number forty-one of the “100 Best-Ever Teen Novels” in 2012.) Herbert’s sweeping book is not easily taken apart; it is a loosely allegorical text of vast political intrigue, ecological responsibility, religious and philosophical questioning, and genetic manipulation, among other things. In an article studying the ambivalent hero of contemporary science fiction, Juan Prieto-Pablos calls *Dune* “the most elaborate science fiction since Tolkien’s saga of the Middle-World” (66), and he is certainly not alone in that assessment. The focus of the novel is Paul Atreides, a.k.a. Paul-Muad’Dib, a messianic prophet. Paul is destined to set off a universe-wide holy war redistributing the balance of power and beginning a new galactic regime that will last for thousands of years. Before he can do this, however, he is nothing more than the gifted fifteen-year-old son of Duke Leto Atreides and the Lady Jessica. Political events lead to Duke Leto’s death and Jessica and Paul’s exile into the desert. This focus on political move and counter-move requires Herbert to tell the tale from multiple vantages, using an omniscient third-person point of view to reveal “plans within plans within plans,” “a feint within a feint within a feint” (18, 43). As a member of a matriarchal religious power-house called the Bene Gesserits, Jessica provides many of these revelations. Perhaps most importantly of all, Jessica explains the deeply religious nature of her training and her son’s potential as a messiah figure. In this way, she fosters her son’s development to surpass her someday as the one destined to be the hero.

The uniqueness of Jessica and Paul’s situation stems from Paul’s eventual rise to hero, and *Dune* scholarship is extensive, including (but certainly not limited to) works by Norman Spinrad, Michael R. Collings, and Donald Palumbo. In light of this, my focus is not on Paul, but Jessica. For over two-thirds of the book, Jessica is more powerful than Paul. She is the hero-

soon-to-be-sidekick. The knowledge of Paul's eventual supremacy makes him the hero regardless of his youthfulness, which complicates the mother-son dynamic. While Jessica's role as mother is apparent throughout the text, there are at least three notable cases where her knowledge and protectiveness are explicit. The first comes after they are ambushed by a group of Fremen, the native people of the desert planet Arrakis (a.k.a. Dune). Jessica takes the leader by surprise, showcasing her superior fighting skills. During the same episode, she uses her Bene Gesserit knowledge to align herself and Paul with long-held Fremen beliefs and prophecies (Herbert 281, 294). The second comes when she truly and completely indoctrinates the two of them into Fremen culture by assuming the role of Reverend Mother to all of their peoples (351-59). The third takes place at the very end of the novel. Paul has overcome the forces of the Emperor, defeating him and those with whom he conspired. As a final act of proving himself to hold the upper hand, Paul defeats his cousin Feyd-Rautha Harkonnen in single combat. Before the combat, Jessica gives Paul a code-word that would render his opponent limp, although Paul does not use it, per se. Afterwards, Jessica and Paul's mate Chani take over to finalize the conditions of Paul's ascension to the throne (481-87). At the end of Paul's rise to power, his new position is tenuous. His followers will wage a universe-wide jihad in his name, and his engagement to Princess Irulan (and tie to the previous royal family) is nothing more than a political arrangement. He is left, then, with only his true-love/concubine Chani and Jessica, although the roles he and Jessica played are finally and forever reversed.

Brother-Brother

Moving away from Paul and Jessica, there is less likelihood of such hard and fast lines of separation when it comes to the brother-brother hero/sidekick scenario. Part of this comes from

the inherent lack of a parental figure in the duo: both struggle, to some degree, to rise to the call of responsibility and protection. In this instance, I use the highly regarded YA text, *The Outsiders*. When it comes to YA, one thing is certain: its existence as not just a distinct, but a serious literary genre became undeniable with the publication of S. E. Hinton's novel in 1967. Published when Hinton was nineteen, *The Outsiders* deals with socio-economic violence, prejudice, gangs, and death. As a text from the mid-to-late 1960s, a decade fraught with social unrest and change in the United States, it speaks to youth culture from one actively experiencing it—and although somewhat dated now, still resonates with those wondering how to make sense of the world in which they live. Michael Cart describes Hinton's impact on the literary world as a “sea change” that would bring YA into its own (*Young Adult* 43). Nilsen and Donalson refer to Hinton in a knowing exaggeration, as “the one who changed it all” (8). They furthermore contend, in a less exaggerated sense, that Hinton was one of the pivotal authors who helped “give the whole field a nudge that changed ‘the rules’ about what was expected and what was possible in books published for teenagers” (8). Cart cites part of her success in “managing to bridge” the gap between “the real child of today and his fictional counterpart” (*Young Adult* 47). *The Outsiders*, and other novels by Hinton like *Rumble Fish* (1975) and *Tex* (1979), have become standard reading material in middle school classrooms.

If I take the first-person protagonist, Ponyboy Curtis, as the hero of *The Outsiders*, then there are a number of possible brother-brother sidekick relationships to study. Ponyboy's two biological brothers, Darrel “Darry” and Sodapop, do not count. After losing their parents, Darry has been the father-figure for his two younger brothers. Sodapop spends too little time with Ponyboy to be any kind of sidekick figure. The three brothers belong to a group calling itself the

Greasers. Their particular gang of Greasers includes four other boys/young men: Dallas “Dally” Winston, Steve Randall, Two-Bit Matthews, and Johnny Cade. Johnny, as the “youngest, next to [Ponyboy],” is the one Ponyboy spends most of his time with, and the one qualifying as sidekick. Johnny is further described as “the gang’s pet, everyone’s kid brother,” which further endears him to Ponyboy’s side (Hinton 11).

In a cycle reminiscent of Twain’s Tom and Huck, Ponyboy and Johnny trade the role of hero back and forth. The adventure Ponyboy and Johnny undertake begins when the two are jumped by five of their rivals, the privileged upper-class Socials. When Ponyboy is almost drowned in a park fountain, Johnny pulls a switchblade and kills the leader of the Socials in self-defense (56). Johnny makes the decisions, but Ponyboy provides the nurturing care. Johnny keeps a level head when the killing occurs, getting them the help and plan they need to disappear and lay low (57, 61, 71). Ponyboy reads out loud to kill the time, muses about life and nature, and keeps Johnny’s spirits up (75, 77, 78). The second pivotal moment in the story comes when they realize the church where their hideout is has caught on fire—with some children inside (91). Ponyboy makes the decision to go inside and help bring the children out, and Johnny follows. All survive the immediate fire, but Johnny gets caught under a burning beam, causing paralysis and eventually death (95, 148).

In a way, Johnny is everyone’s sidekick in the novel, as he is the gang mascot. This is especially true with Dally, the hardest, most troubled member of the gang. Johnny’s death breaks Dally, causing him to self-destruct by robbing a grocery store and pulling an unloaded gun on the police, resulting in his death (154). Two-Bit mentions to Ponyboy that “I wish it was any one of use except Johnny . . . We could get along without anyone but Johnny” (123). No one else in the

gang exhibits anything close to sidekick-behavior. Several of them are flat, filler characters, and none have the requisite relational substance to qualify as sidekicks. Johnny's ability to be everyone's sidekick comes from his need for a family: "if it hadn't been for the gang, Johnny would never have known what love and affection are" (12). His "puppy that has been kicked too many times" appearance endears him to those who might protect him—everyone else, in this case (11). The brotherly connection Johnny shares with Ponyboy is founded on their mutual youth and relative innocence. They hide from the police as equals: neither has ever been in this type of situation before. Ponyboy edges Johnny out as the hero because of Johnny's eventual demise. Ponyboy visits him in the hospital, thinks about his condition almost constantly, and is the one who changes the most from Johnny's death.

The brotherly connection (and Johnny's death) also brings to mind the Biblical concept of a "brother's keeper," from Genesis 4:8-10:

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I do not know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." (*The New International Version Bible* 4)

There is no Cain figure in Ponyboy and Johnny's brotherly connection. In fact, they are both very much like Abel—the victim. Ponyboy, unlike Cain, owns and accepts his role as his brother's keeper: all the Greasers do. Johnny was theirs to protect. Dally sees Johnny as the younger version of himself that he might be able to protect. This is further supported by Johnny's hero-worship of Dally (90, 148). Ponyboy, on the other hand, inadvertently leads Johnny into the

burning building—into danger. It is Johnny, ironically and yet fittingly, who saves Ponyboy when he shoves him to the window, telling him to “Get out” (93). In the end, it was the one needing more protection who saved the one responsible for protecting. Or, to put it another way, the less powerful protected the more powerful—very much an archetypal sidekick act, the saving of the hero.

This idea of a sidekick saving the hero in a brotherly connection can be nicely fleshed out by briefly revisiting Tolkien’s Frodo/Sam and Le Guin’s Ged/Vetch. Frodo and Sam show what is possible when the heroes/sidekicks are willing to lay down their lives for one another. Sam very nearly does so. As the less-capable (in the sense that Frodo was chosen to carry the Ring, and not him), Sam is committed to the point of death when he carries the invalid Frodo near the end of their quest. Ged and Vetch share a similar kinship, albeit on a smaller scale. Building upon their aforementioned relationship, it is important to recall how young both Ged and Vetch are in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Ged is nineteen, the same age as Vetch’s younger brother. The brotherly connection, then, is not lost on Vetch, as he undoubtedly sees Ged as his wizardly “little brother.” Vetch is the less powerful wizard, but goes with Ged to see the journey through, just as Sam is the “less powerful” hobbit, and Johnny the “least powerful” Greaser. This issue of differential power brings Paul and Jessica back to mind, as defining their respective literary roles depends upon the evolving power relationship between the two.

Analyzing these various character sets also implies the need for an accurate understanding of their natures: Frodo and Sam’s quest is quite different than Ged and Vetch’s, while both are extremely different than Ponyboy and Johnny’s. Briefly contextualizing Tolkien, Le Guin, and Hinton helps reveal how their heroes and sidekicks embodied specific historical

needs and responses—which further the connection between brothers. This is particularly evident in regards to the influence World War I had on *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien, a British survivor of the Battle of the Somme, published *The Hobbit* between the wars and *The Lord of the Rings* in the 1950s, following World War II. What more evident need for heroes and sidekicks than warfare? Le Guin, publishing in 1968 America, offers a much more “gray” understanding of the nature of good and evil. Many of her works, *A Wizard of Earthsea* among them, place great value on interpersonal relationships in the face of ambiguous large-scale power struggles. Hinton, as already mentioned, wrote from what she knew as a High School student living among the Socials and Greasers in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Cart, *Young Adult* 43).

Understanding at least part of the moral contexts surrounding these issues is important because it lets us see how these heroes and sidekicks are utilized differently and how they have been adapted to help their audiences deal with (or at least consider) these important questions. For Ged and Vetch, the YA audience needs to determine what is good and what is evil: can we see the world in only white and black, and if not, how do we handle what is shaded in gray? Frodo and Sam help their readers problematize that understanding even in the face of the classic characterizations of good vs. evil found in high fantasy. Frodo’s descent into the One Ring’s control brings to mind the ideas of falling, “gray-ness,” and redemption. Hinton almost moves entirely away from the philosophical, bringing the reader into a harsh, inescapable, and very real-world context: how do we bridge the distance separating us from those who would kill us? In this case of heroes and sidekicks, I would suggest that the answer lies in the brotherly connection formed both in the texts and potentially in a reader’s own situation. Frodo leans on Sam for help

through the fires of Mordor. Ged needed Vetch to help him face a dark doppelganger. Ponyboy needed Johnny to break free of the cycle of violence.

Such reliance on the brother-brother connection in the face of evil is mirrored by the sister-sister connection, as Nancy Drew for instance relies on the support given to her by her sidekicks. Although to be fair, Nancy never shies from her call of responsibility and protection—she easily assumes her position in the parental gap. Part of this comes from the nature of the Nancy Drew series in general.

Sister-Sister

The Nancy Drew series is an interesting microcosm unto itself, considering its extensive publication history. For this dissertation, I have used the revised 1950s-1960s versions due to their easy availability. Because much has already been written about the revisions and their effect (see Paretsky; Rehak; Zuckerman), I will not delve into that conversation here. What I am concerned with is what comes from Nancy's sidekick/partners: cousins Georgia "George" Fayne and Bess Marvin.

The sidekick cousins first appear in the fifth novel of the series, *The Secret of Shadow Ranch*. George and Bess bring Nancy to their uncle and aunt's horse ranch in hopes that she can help them solve why mysterious and destructive things have been occurring on the ranch (Keene 4-6). The mystery grows to include George and Bess's cousin Alice and her search for her missing father (13-14). The relationship Nancy has with George and Bess falls under the omnipresent fact that Nancy has been without a mother since the age of three (7). While this is never commented on in this volume of the series, it certainly places their partnership into the aforementioned pantheon of broken family-beginnings. Nancy's single-parent starting point quite

strongly influences her assumption of the hero role. George and Bess's personal characteristics are quickly described and set the stage for how they interact as Nancy's sidekicks in the mystery-solving process. George is an "attractive tomboyish girl with short dark hair," while Bess is a "pretty, slightly plump blonde" (1). The two do very little in this text to distance themselves from these basic and constrictive descriptions. As the tomboy of the group, George ends up performing many of the physical endeavors called for during their investigation and foiling of the villains (6, 10, 66, 91, 100, 116, 173). Bess, as the slightly plump blonde, has her fair share of "blonde" or "girly" moments (27, 46, 56, 65, 72, 75, 112, 119) as well as supposedly "plump" moments where she wonders what she is going to eat next (4, 17, 113, 116-17, 134, 138). In collating these descriptions and their actions, it is easy to see how George exhibits the stereotypical male actions, Bess exhibits the stereotypical female actions (while also playing the comic relief role), and Nancy exhibits a mixture of both. This would become even more interesting if viewed through a gender-role/gender-study lens, especially considering how the three interact in any given scenario. I am certainly not the first to make mention of this (see Inness 361; Foote 525; Dyer and Romalov 17, 35).

What is it, then, about Nancy Drew and the sister-sister relationship that is different than what we saw in the brother-brother relationships? Perhaps not much, as we see a similar camaraderie and willingness to put one's self in harm's way for the other in the brother-brother examples. We also see the co-dependence on facing the issues at hand, especially in the absence of strong parental figures. However, because of the nature of mystery novels, George and Bess must give Nancy support in ways entirely outside the perspective given by *The Outsiders* or *Lord of the Rings*. This difference obviously hearkens back to my consideration of Watson's back-

and-forth with Holmes. Unlike Watson however, George and Bess tend to be more active participants in piecing together the clues needed to solve the mystery. In a sisterly move quite unlike the self-involved Holmes, Nancy recognizes the value of the support she is given, and capitalizes on it by sharing her thoughts about each part of the mystery. While George and Bess are sometimes just the Watsonesque sounding boards Nancy needs to figure out a clue's meaning, they do have some moments of individual insight. For example, while initially disappointed in an apparent chance to find Alice's father, George sensibly suggests that they keep looking around the area in hope of spotting him (116). In response, "the others agreed that George had a point" (116). It tells much about all three that there exists a common-sense dialogue of ideas and possibilities: the cousins are level-headed and trustworthy enough for Nancy to share her workings-out of the mystery, and Nancy is not too prideful to keep the logic hidden from her sidekicks, as Holmes often tends to do.

George and Bess do inevitably fill Watson's shoes as they give Nancy some physical back-up. Watson carries the pistol when Holmes needs a firearm; George and Bess watch out for Nancy when she is threatened. Near the end of *Shadow Ranch*, the villains attempt to kidnap Nancy: "Before Nancy could say anything to the two men, Bess's voice rang out. 'She is *not* going with you!' 'Let her go!' George ordered. . . the two [men] ran away fast, disappearing under the grandstand" (140). But one thing that George and Bess cannot do (that Watson, interestingly, did to some degree), is take on the role of parent for Nancy. Consequently, Nancy does not parent them either, regardless of Nancy's assuming the lead position as hero. To locate a situation where the adolescent hero becomes an obvious parental figure, I turn to the non-romantic, mixed-gender hero/sidekick paring.

Sister-Brother/Brother-Sister

The non-romantic female/male hero sidekick pairings show some expected similarities to the brother-brother or sister-sister pairings, as the nature of sibling care and protection runs true in these cases as well. One instance that does create a different scenario is when there is a marked age difference between the siblings—whether of the same sex or mixed. In Jasper Fforde's fantasy tale, *The Last Dragonslayer*, first-person protagonist Jennifer Strange finds herself leading the much younger Tiger Prawns (16). Jennifer's fostering of Tiger's development is unlike the other relationships I have covered so far in that the (almost) sixteen-year-old Jennifer *must* take on the role of Tiger's guardian/parent. There is no ambiguity or reluctance. While this mirrors Batman's fostering the growth of Robin, I make the differentiation here based on Jennifer's age and situation. She is a scant four years older than Tiger and they are both foundlings—a tried-and-true fantasy trope. Jennifer is an orphan with no knowledge whatsoever of her parentage. Foundlings in *The Last Dragonslayer* typically come from an orphanage, and are eventually entered into indentured servitude to serve society until they reach age eighteen (16). As she unravels the complications inherent to the plot, Jennifer soon discovers she is the last Dragonslayer, foreseen four hundred years ago (123). Tiger does not fulfill any prophecies, but is similarly caught up in life as a foundling.

A foundling is a symbol of infinite possibility in the world of fantastic literature. A few other notable uses of the foundling in YA fantasy include Shasta from C. S. Lewis's *The Horse and His Boy*, Taran from Lloyd Alexander's *The Chronicles of Prydain*, Matthias from Brian Jacques' *Redwall*, and Lyra from Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*. In the article, "True

Legitimacy: The Myth of the Foundling in *Bleak House*,” Michele S. Ware gives a brief account of the foundling myth:

[It] is the complex working out and revelation of the main character’s parentage, along with the concurrent restoration to his rightful place in society. The foundling moves through the novel (and this movement *is* the plot) from illegitimacy and exclusion to self-knowledge and inclusion. (2)

If a foundling appears in an important role in a text, then, the nature of “being found” drives the focus of the narrative. In the case of *Bleak House*, the foundling is Esther Summerson—a character Ware calls “Dickens’ fully realized foundling myth” (4). The *quintessential* foundling in English literature might just be the title character from Henry Fielding’s *The History of Tom Jones: a Foundling* (Ware 2). Jennifer Strange and Tiger Prawns, then, belong to a very specific subset of characterization. This subset can become even *more* complicated depending on the circumstances of a foundling’s birth. Many are assumed to be bastards—a terminological “slippage” that leaves children “open to the stigma” that resides therein (Francus 87).

While Jennifer from *The Last Dragonslayer* must move toward legitimacy and inclusion, she must also act as the surrogate parent helping Tiger do the same. The act of placing an adolescent in the role of parent is one that has cropped up in YA novels time and again: *The Boxcar Children*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Outsiders*, *Homecoming*, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, to name but a few. YA author and critic Nancy Werlin states, “The truth is that parents and parental authority figures are usually of great importance in YA novels, even, and perhaps especially when they are not present in the story at all” (1934-35). Typically, a foundling begins his or her quest in a lowly social position, as a servant or ward of some fashion. However, this

circumstance is often thrust upon foundlings because the cloudy circumstances of their discovery position them as harbingers of change. Jennifer and Tiger share this possibility. Jennifer, as the hero, has already been established as the acting manager of the Kazaam House of Magic, not to mention the litany of astounding things that happen to her (Fforde x, 2). Tiger's arrival, aside from allowing some explication regarding the world in which Jennifer lives, also suggests the further possibility of greatness. Tiger, as the sidekick, does what a good sidekick would do: enables his hero to act.

There are many such interactions between Tiger and Jennifer. Most of them serve as moments of respite before Jennifer needs to rush away again. One in particular, however, shows Tiger's invaluableness as a sidekick. In this case, Jennifer turns down an offer of freedom for herself and Tiger. After she apologizes to Tiger (who had overheard her side of the phone conversation), he replies with "No apology necessary" (201). He continues: "'Sister Assumpta bet me a moolah I wouldn't last a week at Kazam, but aside from that, I would only be back where I started.' He was taking it quite well, all things considered" (201). Tiger exemplifies the perfect sidekick for a character like Jennifer. His background as a foundling brings them instant solidarity. His unquestionable support for her decisions allows her to act with impunity when it comes to his well-being. Finally, his choice to side with her against the moody and cranky employees of Kazam reinforces her role as a capable and beloved guardian (134, 163, 249).

Although Tiger is a dutiful sidekick/foster-younger-brother, there are two things he cannot do that make him a specific kind of sidekick. The first is that he cannot take Jennifer's place. Many of the other sidekicks mentioned up until this point have had moments of opportunity to take up the mantle of hero. Robin has many adventures in which he takes the point

position in front of Batman. Jessica and Paul fit into the “dual protagonist” scenario first described with Tom and Huck. Sam picks up the One Ring when Frodo cannot. Johnny saves Ponyboy from drowning and burning. Tiger, on the one hand, does rise to the occasion to run Kazam when Jennifer goes gallivanting as the last dragonslayer. On the other hand, Tiger never accompanies her on these quests until the beginning of book two, *The Song of the Quarkbeast*. By book three, *The Eye of Zoltar*, Tiger is back to running the business while Jennifer leaves for destinations unknown. The second thing Tiger cannot do is begin a romantic relationship with Jennifer. This is mostly due to their obvious age difference, which would make such a romance socially inappropriate. When romance *is* brought into the equation, however, all sorts of questions arise regarding parental roles, protection of the less powerful, and inter-dependence.

Female Hero/Male Sidekick—Romance

While it would be inappropriate for Jennifer Strange to begin a physical relationship with Tiger Prawns, the same is not true for Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* quartet. In the first novel, *Alanna: The First Adventure*, Alanna complicates any easy reading of her story: she trades places with her twin brother and presents herself as a young man seeking to become a knight. As was the case with George and Bess, Alanna’s identity-hiding and cross-dressing present a rich mine of potential application and research. It certainly brings to mind any number of works and similar themes, including Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and its many versions, re-tellings, and adaptations. Additionally, *Alanna* aligns itself with *Twelfth Night*’s “tendency to destabilize understandings of the human subject in general and the masculine-feminine dyad in particular,” according to L. Monique Pittman (123). This destabilization is apparent throughout *Alanna*. The boys she befriends know her as a boy, even as she struggles to

hide the signs of her physical development: she wraps her breasts flat and becomes surreptitious when she starts having her period. Although she begins her time in study as the weakest of the entry-level pages (she is ten when the novel opens), her tenacity brings her respect. At the beginning of the saga, only three people besides Alanna know her secret: her brother Thom, their nursemaid Maude, and Coram, the soldier assigned to accompany Alanna to the palace for her training. By the end of the first book, three others know as well. Two become love interests for Alanna: Prince Jonathan and George, the Thief King. The third is George's mother, who helped Alanna understand her body's changes during puberty. An awareness of Alanna's cross-dressing is essential when considering her sidekick, Jon, as it is an omnipresent factor in the first two books of the series.

The hero/sidekick relationship between Alanna and Jon is complicated by their ranks. Because Jon is four years older, he becomes a knight at eighteen when Alanna is becoming a squire at fourteen. Alanna's successes as a page make her the most desirable squire: Jon plans to take her on as his squire even before he discovers she is a girl. The book's climax comes in the final pages, as Jon and Alanna encounter and defeat several ancient beings of magical power, the Ysandir (250-62). During the battle, Alanna's clothes are magically—and literally—stripped off of her, leaving her clad only in her “belt and scabbard” (253). Jon, despite “openly staring,” chooses to focus on defeating the Ysandir and waiting for a subsequent explanation (254). Alanna learns in the aftermath that Jon had intended her as his squire—and still does (273-74). Alanna then becomes his squire, which takes the tale into the second novel, *In the Hand of the Goddess*, where romance becomes much more important.

Consequently, as a squire to a knight, Alanna would be expected to fit more naturally in the ranks of sidekicks. Two factors, however, keep her firmly situated in the role of hero while Jon remains the sidekick. The first is the narrative focus and nature of the quartet: it is Alanna's story. Throughout *Alanna: The First Adventure*, life as a page is one of an equal playing field. It is only during her time as a squire that Alanna could be considered a sidekick. But this is short lived: by the end of *In the Hand of the Goddess*, Alanna is a knight herself and no longer serves in a subservient status. The second factor is Alanna's abilities. It is clear to the reader that she is gifted beyond her peers, squires or otherwise, so much so that Deirdre F. Baker describes Alanna as being able to accomplish the "appropriation of the magic and fighting skills of various cultures" (45). Conversely, much of Jon's narrative is spent keeping him in droll court settings or throwing him in peril only to be saved by Alanna—which she does several times. Any intrigue is uncovered by Alanna; she is squire in name only.

While book one of *Song of the Lioness* only gives glimpses of the romance to come, the second novel, *In the Hand of the Goddess*, brings romance and sex to the forefront. Alanna finds herself drawn to develop her skills as a woman-at-court, complete with the expected dress, posture, and the like (156). This desire comes partly from her general thirst for knowledge, but also partly from jealousy over Jon's romantic conquests. Alanna finds herself in a love triangle. George professes his desire for her, even before seeing her in a make-up and a dress, and even makes a marriage proposal (90). Jon shows his interest in Alanna as well (127), and succeeds where George does not: he and Alanna become lovers (178-79). The movement from friends to lovers is a quantum leap that fills the parental gap. Alanna, essentially abandoned by her only parent and separated from her only sibling, creates her own family. Jon, as the prince, holds the

political authority in their union, but Alanna, as his squire, is dedicated to protecting him when he cannot do so for himself. Alanna, at least by the end of *In the Hand of the Goddess*, eschews her relationship with Jon to strike out on her own as a knight of the realm. By leaving to go adventuring, Alanna chooses to place her surrogate family on hold—indeed, putting on hold the very possibility of creating her own family with herself as mother. In fact, it is Alanna’s intention to never procreate (although she eventually does).

Another female hero with intentions to never have children—but who eventually does—is Katniss Everdeen from Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games*. Like Alanna, protagonist Katniss finds herself in a love triangle between two potential sidekicks. Unlike Alanna, however, Katniss fights the need for a sidekick even as she keeps being faced with them, one after another. She is the first hero studied here who is truly reluctant to have a sidekick. This reluctance makes her a fitting co-example along with Alanna for this section of my study. In many ways, the only sidekick Katniss has comes from outside of her love triangle: Rue, the female tribute from District 11. Rue is a surrogate little sister for Katniss (she reminds Katniss of her younger sister Primrose [Collins 201]), and actively helps her by providing medicinal knowledge (200), information about their competition (206), and a second pair of hands in a scheme to blow up the food stockpiled by the more vicious tributes (208). This sister-sister relationship is a limited one, however, as Rue dies shortly after they form their alliance (236). The focus on sidekicks, then, is with the love triangle of Gale Hawthorne and Peeta Mellark.

Katniss describes Gale as “the only person with whom I can be myself” (6). Along with this familiarity, Gale is also Katniss’s hunting partner and the closest thing she has to a romantic relationship in her bleak existence. He is also the closest male figure in her life, as her father died

in a mining accident years earlier (5). From the way Katniss, as a first person narrator, describes her relationship with Gale, it is clear she has not come to recognize the romantic feelings she harbors for Gale, stating that “there’s never been anything romantic between [us],” but also attributing her jealousy of other girls’ affections toward Gale to the difficulty of finding a good hunting partner (10). Later on, she does begin to recognize the depth of their relationship, citing “friend” as “too casual a word” to describe what he means to her (112). However, over the course of the novel, Gale becomes a non-player in the plot. He simply is not there. Once Katniss leaves for the Hunger Games, he becomes the hope Katniss left behind. She considers him the one who will help provide for her sister and mother—which he will do if she fails to survive. As a sidekick, Gale complicates Katniss’s romantic feelings toward her other in-game sidekick: Peeta. This complication could be due to Katniss’s reluctance to accept any male figure in her life—perhaps in fear that he would leave her as well. (In the tyrannical political atmosphere in which they live, this is a likely scenario.) Gale, while initially the obvious romantic match for Katniss, becomes a non-factor by the middle of book two, *Catching Fire*.

Peeta, on the other hand, only grows in his romantic possibility. Because Peeta is the male tribute from Katniss’s district, the two of them share a great deal of time together during the pre-Hunger Games happenings. What makes the Peeta-Katniss relationship so interesting is the fact that although Peeta has above average strength (108), he depends on Katniss to keep him safe for a good portion of the conflict. This might be unfair to Peeta, as his idea to present them as star-crossed lovers helps them secure the hearts—and pocketbooks—of an adoring public (135). Additionally, his actions within the arena help keep the most vicious tributes off of Katniss’s back for the early portion of the contest (162). However, Katniss is always seen as the

greater threat, and is the one holding the power in their relationship. This is especially true once Peeta's festering leg injury requires him to rely completely on Katniss.

Peeta, as a sidekick, is there to give Katniss emotional support, whereas Gale had given her the physical help needed to hunt and survive. Peeta is the first to outwardly admit Katniss had been the object of attention by a number of boys in their district (130). The attention he gives her before the Games is marked by intellectual and emotional seriousness. Peeta fills Katniss's emotional gaps in a way Gale never could. Gale, on the other hand, lessens the physical responsibilities required of Katniss. Peeta becomes the obvious romantic winner for a number of reasons. He is the emotion to her strength. They survive the death and sickness-filled Hunger Games together. He retains his purity throughout the series while Gale eventually sacrifices his in book three. In terms of family, Peeta and Katniss marry after the overthrow of the government, eventually having children. That Peeta becomes the other half of Katniss's physical family unit is all the more meaningful with the death of Prim—an event depleting Katniss's original family even more. Gale, on the other hand, effectively perishes as a sidekick and ceases to function in any meaningful way in Katniss's life.

That Katniss—and Alanna, for that matter—find themselves in love-triangles is not terribly surprising. That the two love interests also function as their sidekicks in adventuring, however, moves them beyond mere romance and into an alternate hero/sidekick pairing. It is important to note that Alanna and Katniss never go adventuring with both sidekicks at the same time. That situation is something different: the hero/sidekick triad.

Hero/Sidekick Triad

A fascinating take on the mixed gender pairing is the hero/sidekick triad: where a hero has two sidekicks instead of just one. For instance, Taran, the hero of Lloyd Alexander's *The Chronicles of Prydain*, has the Princess Eilonwy and the creature Gurgi as sidekicks. Meg from Madeline L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* has her brother Charles Wallace and their friend Calvin. J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter has Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley. The trio from *The Hunger Games* does not qualify, as Katniss, Peeta, and Gale never adventure together as a unified group. Likewise, Alanna, Jon, and George maintain strict lines of separation. My choice of a working triad to analyze here comes from Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series. The hero is Percy Jackson, his female sidekick is Annabeth Chase, and his male sidekick is the satyr Grover Underwood. Percy's origin story is similar to Harry Potter's: he has a not-ideal living situation at home (his step-father is a low-life), he discovers that he has inherent supernatural abilities (he is the son of the Greek god Poseidon), and he goes away to a special school for kids like him, "Camp Half-blood." Riordan makes the special school a summer-vacation camp, instead of the school-year institution of Rowling's Hogwarts, flip-flopping the series' respective calendar of events. There is also an air of mysterious promise around Percy. While Harry was "the boy who lived," Percy is also the apparent fulfillment of a far-reaching prophecy with far-reaching implications (also like Harry, for that matter). Percy, again like Harry, also interacts with an intelligent and gifted female sidekick (Annabeth is the daughter of Athena) and an awkward but loyal male sidekick (Grover is trying to prove his worth as a satyr).

What makes the Percy/Annabeth/Grover triad different from the Harry/Hermione/Ron triad, in part, are the dual quests of books two and three. Book two, *The Sea of Monsters*, has

Percy try to recover the Golden Fleece, as well as the imprisoned Grover. Book three, *The Titan's Curse*, sends out a tracking team to find the missing goddess Artemis, and also the kidnapped Annabeth. In these books, then, Percy supplements his original triad with other supporting characters in an effort to restore his original group. The sidekick status quo, as it were, needs to be rebalanced in both of these instances. The “real” quests are to recover the hero's sidekicks, not the divine prizes. Because this part of the study is not about Percy but about Annabeth and Grover, the implications of removing one of them from the triad equation is what makes it applicable.

At the beginning of *The Sea of Monsters*, Percy dreams that Grover is in trouble. At the end of *The Lightning Thief* (book one), Grover left to search for the missing god Pan, and Percy has not heard from him in the intervening months (Riordan, *Lightning* 356; *Sea* 73). Percy begins his quest to retrieve Grover, who happens to be in the same place as the Golden Fleece needed to save the camp's magical boundaries (Riordan, *Sea* 87). What makes this quest different, in part, is that it includes Tyson, Percy's new-found, half-brother Cyclops. Tyson is the ad-hoc Grover, taking the place of the male sidekick, complete with magical/mythical powers based in nature. Tyson's inclusion as a new character also allows for any requisite exposition for new readers who may have missed the first book.

Making Grover part of the quest's purpose places his role as sidekick in an external locus: his well-being becomes the driving force behind the actions of the hero. Furthermore, Grover has used his nature-based magic to forge an “empathy link” between himself and Percy, allowing them to communicate over long distances as well as joining their fates together (Riordan, *Sea* 74). Grover simultaneously exists as sidekick and not-sidekick. The triad remains

complete, however, as both Percy and Annabeth travel to reunite themselves with Grover. Tyson is not the only additional character in the questing process, as Clarisse (daughter of Ares) also joins in. With only one new addition, Grover may have been displaced by Tyson. Adding in two characters disallows for such a structural substitution. Grover retains his place.

In a very similar set-up, *The Titan's Curse* takes Annabeth and places her as the object of the quest. Percy and Grover join with new-comers Thalia, Zoe, and Bianca to rescue Artemis and Annabeth. Percy and Annabeth are now in the 8th grade, and their age and absence creates the first real notions of a potential romance, shifting a one-time brother-sister role into something different. In this instance, Annabeth's peril is compounded, making her role even more ever-present than Grover's in *The Sea of Monsters*.

Rowling never parts the three members of Harry's hero/sidekick triad for long, and with the minor exception of the Tri-Wizard Tournament, Harry hardly needs to quest in order to save his sidekicks (Rowling, *Goblet* 498-499). Riordan's books, on the other hand, are based on the premise of questing—the influence of Greek mythology and Heracles' tasks are apparent throughout. Making a sidekick the object of the quest places him or her as the central focus for the novel—he or she is never far from the thoughts of the hero. This scenario is not a new one, recalling Campbell's explications of the reception of the ultimate boon (172) or the need for rescue (201). Granted, his descriptions suggest different connotations than Percy Jackson's situation, but as Campbell notes, “the changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description” (246). YA also has its fair share of questing for one's sidekick/companion. Take for example Lloyd Alexander's third *Chronicles of Prydain* book, *The Castle of Llyr*. Taran's newly flourishing feelings for Eilonwy dominate the book, culminating in his attempt to rescue her

from an evil kidnapper (57). In an empowering plot development, Eilonwy is the one who holds the power to free herself, and she does so in the end, notwithstanding the efforts put forth by Taran and others to free her (Alexander 188-89).

There is one thing, however, that complicates Riordan's sidekick-as-quest scenario: in both cases, there is a more weighty nominal reason for the quest: the Golden Fleece and the finding of Artemis. If Grover and/or Annabeth were not Percy's sidekicks, he would have no reason to save them, and the quests would be simple repetitions of the classical models. In fact, in both cases, Percy uses the more pressing quest as a front in order to gain permission to save his friends. From the standpoint of the YA hero, then, the choice is clear: saving the sidekick is the biggest concern.

YA's precondition of a "broken" family dynamic for the partnering of a sidekick with a hero suggests the need for further analysis, which I will undertake in the next chapters, in those cases where the new "family" dynamic of hero/sidekick subsequently breaks down. Given the nature of a YA sidekick, the relationship will likely break or evolve as the sidekick matures and changes. In other genres, a sidekick can exist with relatively little development over any number of novels or adventures. When a YA sidekick does leave his or her hero, it is not always a negative break, as a YA character's maturation is often based on the realization that one must stand alone someday, without the aid of a parent, parents, or hero. However, it certainly can be a painful process, especially when the hero and sidekick part ways under negative or destructive circumstances.

This chapter has showcased the filling of the parental gap, as well as giving some examples of the hero/sidekick separation. Dick Grayson finds himself at odds with Batman and

strikes out on his own. Ponyboy loses Johnny through death. Others, confined by the limitations of their stories, find themselves still connected. Carrie Kelly continues as Batman's new Robin through the conclusion of Frank Miller's take on the Dark Knight. Violet Parr remains a junior high student at the end of *The Incredibles*, although it would be interesting to see what her relationship with her mother would be like when she hits her later teenage-years. Jessica remains Paul's mother, even while their hero/sidekick roles are reversed. George and Bess continue to solve mysteries with Nancy Drew to this day. Katniss and Peeta end *The Hunger Games* trilogy connected for the rest of their lives.

Even more kinds of separations exist, and studying some of them forms the basis of the coming three chapters, which show three distinct ways YA enables these separations to occur when a sidekick comes into his or her own. Chapter Three explores what happens when a sidekick is given enough narrative opportunity to grow outside of the sidekick role, emerging into the role of hero. I study Neville Longbottom from Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Tenar from Le Guin's *Earthsea* series.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SECONDARY HERO

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that sidekicks are very numerous in adult and YA literature, and that these sidekicks can be usefully categorized into a number of distinct types directly and critically relating to the wider purposes of the narratives in which they exist. The second chapter explored the ways in which heroes and sidekicks must interact within the duologies of gender-specific standpoints and also in specific family relationships. I also argued in Chapter Two about the filling of the parental gap, as well as some examples of subsequent hero/sidekick separation. In addition, this parental gap seems to strongly distinguish YA heroes/sidekicks from those found in other literatures or adult cultural forms. When the parental gap is actualized, it creates a general growth pattern for sidekicks, either transforming their co-relationships with heroes into something entirely new or fracturing them entirely.

For the remainder of this dissertation, I will be examining this general growth pattern, what I call “sidekick separation.” In YA, and especially over series with multiple volumes that have extended chronologies, this “sidekick separation” seems almost always to move the sidekick narratively upwards, becoming a kind of “sidekick elevation.” In view of the audience, “sidekick elevation” makes both aesthetic and logical sense. Just as the YA reader, who can naturally relate most closely to younger and more subsidiary sidekicks, will grow and enter adolescence, so too will the sidekicks tend to grow and be “elevated” in significant ways if they remain part of those stories. This is especially apparent when these readers concurrently experience adolescence alongside characters from a publication history of longer stories like *Harry Potter*.

I argue that “sidekick elevation” often takes one of three distinct trajectories, each of which will be the successive focus of this and the remaining chapters. I call the first the “secondary hero,” which will be the focus of this chapter. This occurs when sidekicks are given narrative space ample enough for them to emerge in their own heroic roles. Sometimes, sidekicks become the main focus of storylines already traversed, or what I call “sidekick sequels,” and examples of this second trajectory will be analyzed in Chapter Four. Finally, as I will delineate in Chapter Five, trajectory three is the sidekick-narrated “meta-novel,” that is, where the primary narrative point of view is that of the sidekick, not that of the hero.

Since “deutero-protagonists” are fairly common throughout literature, and since this trajectory of sidekick elevation seems to involve the least narrative displacement of the hero, I will begin here with the “secondary hero.” Previous allusions to this scenario include Dick Grayson as Robin, as his many decades as the Boy Wonder eventually bring him to strike out on his own as Nightwing. This emergence is particularly felt in the realm of YA, as it brings to mind the *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman* yet again. The difference here, and perhaps a new element in understanding elements of these genres, is the eventual ending point for the sidekick; does he or she grow, emerging as an indisputable “adult,” or is the ending point something else entirely? In this direction, Roberta Seelinger Trites categorizes YA as “probably the only genre in the world designed to propel the reader out of his or her own subject position” (“*Harry Potter* Novels” 481). Trites uses the first four *Harry Potter* novels to illustrate how YA sets up its readership to eventually grasp that “the only way for adolescents to empower themselves is to quit being so adolescent. Grow up. Get over yourselves” (“*Harry Potter* Novels” 481). While Trites makes a compelling argument (and one that is difficult to dispute, given the nature of YA),

my investigation of the sidekick asks whether or not there are other ways to empowerment beyond simply “growing up,” or perhaps whether or not the analysis changes with differing definitions for “growing up.” Considering how I focus on the sidekick and not the hero also counters Trites’ claims to a certain extent. My first case study investigating sidekick elevation also comes from J. K. Rowling’s sizeable *Harry Potter* universe: Neville Longbottom. The second case study, and perhaps one that pushes the understanding of this emergence even farther, is Tenar from Ursula Le Guin’s *Earthsea* novels.

Neville Longbottom

Initially, Neville does not play a role significant enough to function as Harry’s sidekick in any fashion. The more obvious choices for Harry’s sidekick are Hermione and/or Ron. In this case, however, I consider Hermione and Ron ineligible as they are as much the “hero” as Harry by the end of the series, a byproduct of the hero/sidekick triad over the course of seven novels. Harry’s triad with Hermione and Ron remakes the roles of hero and sidekick. In this case, the triad begins with the young male hero, paired with a young female and young male of similar ages. In many regards, throughout the series, Harry is even something of an underdog in his relationship with Hermione: she is more studious, she knows about her magical heritage for much longer than Harry, and she is a stronger witch than Harry is a wizard. Hermione is already very outspoken and confident—traits still developing in the orphaned, neglected, and emotionally abused Harry. Harry makes a surrogate family with Hermione and Ron, both of whom come from stable family environments.

Neville, however, generally remains subservient to the hero from books one through four. This becomes complicated in the fifth book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Order of the*

Phoenix. It is in this book that Harry learns of the prophecy foretelling Voldemort's downfall, and that both he and Neville were capable of fulfilling it. From this point onward, Neville is the "would-be" Harry, complete with his own set of heroic responsibilities. His leadership status in Harry's absence during book seven even grants him his own sidekick of sorts in Luna Lovegood, not to mention the support of the rest of Dumbledore's Army. While serious scholarly work focusing solely on Neville is exceedingly limited, a considerable amount of growing interest for Neville comes from non-literary sources: the ever-expanding fan-base dedicated to singing Neville's praise (for just a few, see Haber; Yandoli; Entenman). For instance, Emily Asher-Perrin claims Neville is the "one person who determines the course of the Harry Potter series" (par. 1). (It should be noted that Asher-Perrin is a long-time staff writer for Tor.com, a branch of TOR publishing, one of the most recognizable names in science-fiction and fantasy publishers.) Aside from calling Neville "what most Gryffindors would be like in the real world," Asher-Perrin bases her argument for Neville's importance on a series of parallels between Harry's generation and his father's generation: Neville succeeds where his predecessor, Peter Pettigrew, failed (par. 6). Peter's betrayal of those closest to him is the lynchpin allowing Voldemort to triumph over the first Order of the Phoenix. If Neville occupies the same social position within Harry's cadre of friends (and Asher-Perrin goes to great lengths in making her case), then the fact that he "makes all the hard choices that Pettigrew refused the first time around" certainly cements his importance (par. 8).

Neville also allows for an interesting study regarding characters appearing in a novel and its film adaptation. Considering the success and popularity of the Harry Potter films in conjunction with the novels, the actions taken by a character like Neville may become blurred in

the mind of the reader/viewer: the differences between the textual and the filmic character become less clear. As was the case with Arthur from *The Tick* in Chapter One, I use both the cinematic and the textual versions of Neville in my argument. I believe this to be a beneficial course of action given the technological day in which we live, as well as a recognition of the way fans of the books have so heartily embraced the films.

Neville's first significant cinematic appearance is in the movie version of book four, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. In the previous three films, he is relatively static: a wallflower called upon for the punch-line of a physical gag. In the fourth film, arguably the first book or film of the series to fully embody YA, Harry's need of Neville's knowledge of herbs and plants lays the groundwork for Neville's eventual move into sidekick. As Harry is forced to compete in the Triwizard Tournament, he must overcome a series of obstacles. Obstacle two is the rescue of a loved one from his or her bonds underneath the Hogwarts' lake. In the novel, Harry despairs in not finding a way to accomplish such a task until Dobby the house-elf provides him with gillyweed: "Right before you go into the lake, sir—gillyweed! . . . It will make Harry Potter breathe underwater, sir!" (*Goblet* 491; for convenience I will henceforth refer to Rowling's *Harry Potter* series by similarly abbreviated titles). The gillyweed, once taken, transforms Harry into an amphibian of sorts (although incapable of breathing open air), complete with gills, webbed hands, and "elongated" feet with webbed toes that "looked as though he had sprouted flippers" (494). Because of his new ability to breathe and maneuver underwater, he subsequently finishes his task with a flourish—rescuing Ron as well as Gabrielle Delacour, sister to failed champion Fleur Delacour. Dobby's gift of the gillyweed is the talisman or magical aid

given to Harry (à la Campbell's "other helpers") to complete this cycle of heroism, limited or brief as it may be.

In the film version, however, it is Neville who acts as helpful other and provider of the gillyweed. (All film quotes have been personally transcribed. Transcriptions can be found in Appendix A.) As was the case with the novel and Dobby, Harry receives his answer moments before the trial begins, or at least the night before. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are trying to determine a way for Harry to breathe underwater for an hour. When Ron and Hermione get summoned to Professor McGonagall's office (where they will be taken as the captives for the next day's trial), Neville gets propositioned to give Harry a hand with his books. Neville, somewhat nervously, tries to make small talk involving his significant love of plants. Harry impatiently replies, "Neville, no offense, but I really do not care about plants. Now, if there's a Tibetan turnip that will allow me to breathe underwater for an hour, then great. But otherwise . . ." Neville's response comes right before the scene change, allowing for simultaneous suspense and relief on the part of the viewer: "I do not know about a turnip, but you can always use gillyweed." The next scene shows Neville handing the gillyweed to Harry on their way to the tournament's trial. After Harry seems upset over Neville's uncertainty about the duration of the gillyweed's effect, Neville haltingly states, "I just . . . wanted . . . to help." Neville has obvious familiarity with Harry—they've been classmates for three and a half years at this point, as well as fellow members of Gryffindor. However, it remains clear that Neville exists in Harry's periphery. It is also clear Neville feels intimidated of Harry's reputation—which makes sense, given Neville's introverted disposition. Nevertheless, Neville acts as the surrogate Ron/Hermione in this scene. He is both the male friend and confidant who willingly serves as

Harry's second (replacing Ron), as well as the more knowledgeable female witch from whom Harry usually gets aid (replacing Hermione). Harry himself verbally recognizes this fact after Neville's defensive, "I just . . . wanted . . . to help," when he states, "Well, it makes you a sight better than Ron or Hermione. Where are they?"

Neville's provision of gillyweed continues to brighten his star for the viewer. His action gives him screen time and humor, as well as providing Harry someone to dialogue with in the absence of Ron and Hermione. The question, then, is not how this benefits Neville (as it clearly does), but why it was given to Neville in the film and not to Dobby. First, there is the practical explanation—it is logistically (and financially) easier to give lines and screen time to a human actor than to animate a CGI character: Danial Radcliffe has more than a "ping-pong ball on a stick" to interact with, and the studio undoubtedly saves thousands on the (re)creation and application of the CGI-Dobby from *Chamber of Secrets* ("Creating"). Second, Neville's love of herbology makes him a more natural choice to provide the gillyweed. Third, he probably ranks as the fourth most recognizable student (for viewers) at Hogwarts after Harry, Ron, and Hermione (with the possible exception of Draco Malfoy, the school's heel).

The fourth reasonable explanation comes from the timeline established with the publishing of the novels and the filming of the movies. The film version of *The Goblet of Fire* was released in 2005, two years after *The Order of the Phoenix* novel was published. Screenwriter Steve Kloves (who wrote seven of the eight film scripts) and director Mike Newell almost certainly knew the events of book five before beginning to develop *The Goblet of Fire* for the big screen. As the prophecy foretelling Voldemort's eventual demise plays such a significant part of *The Order of the Phoenix*'s plot, the developers would have known that Neville's role in

the series was about to become bigger. In light of this, it makes perfect sense to begin laying as much foundational material as possible to build Neville's on-screen character. This also directly coincides with Rowling's admissions of Neville's increasing importance, stating "I think he's already got a much bigger part . . . Book five was a real turning point for Neville" (Rowling, "Live Web Chat").

The Order of the Phoenix, both film and novel, also significantly bring Neville into the world of major characters. At the end of *The Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort is reborn, ratcheting up the stakes for Harry and co. As the seriousness of an impending war begins to settle upon Hogwarts, the revelation of the prophecy comes to Harry's attention. Finding and hearing the full prophecy becomes Harry's quest as this volume progresses. The rest of Harry's time is spent establishing and training Dumbledore's Army. Both the prophesy and Dumbledore's Army heavily involve Neville. Dumbledore's Army brings the Dumbledore-loyal members of the Hogwarts' student body together in an extracurricular attempt to prepare themselves for the inevitable conflict(s) with Voldemort's minions: to practice the spells and charms they should have been learning in the now suspended Defense Against the Dark Arts class. Harry teaches what he knows of wand-combat, including the somewhat infamous Disarming Charm. Neville is the second student after the Harry/Ron/Hermione triad to arrive. The student arriving before him is Ginny Weasley, Ron's sister and Harry's future wife. When the group divides up into pairs to practice spells and charms, Harry initially finds himself pairing with Neville out of necessity: Neville couldn't find a partner. Harry, as elected leader, worked with him. However, Harry's continued work with him helps Neville improve "beyond all recognition" (*Phoenix* 454). Additionally, when Harry walks around the room to give advice to the other students, he assigns

Neville to Ron and Hermione's pair, to work together as a trio in his absence. As a member of the fifth year student cohort, Neville falls in line quite naturally with Harry, Hermione, and Ron—especially considering their shared membership and history in House Gryffindor. For a brief moment, then, Neville fills Harry's shoes in a very tangible way. Furthermore it is Neville's continued membership and leadership in Dumbledore's Army that eventually allows him to escape Harry's shadow in book seven.

As his relationship with the Harry/Ron/Hermione triad grows, Neville's backstory is further established in *The Order of the Phoenix*. While visiting Ron's father in the wizard hospital St. Mungo's, Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny find themselves in the permanent-spell-damage ward of the hospital—essentially the wing of the hospital that houses patients with spell-induced dementia/Alzheimer's. It is here that they run into Neville and his grandmother, both of whom were visiting Neville's parents. Neville's grandmother reveals that she knows Harry and Hermione from Neville's descriptions and conversations about them, indicating their importance to him as friends. Additionally, she tells Hermione, Ron, and Ginny about why Neville's parents are in the long-term care ward in the first place: they were “tortured into insanity by You-Know-Who's followers” (*Phoenix* 514). After Hermione, Ron, and Ginny express surprise and sadness about the Longbottoms, Harry reveals that he knew already by specifying the person responsible as Bellatrix Lestrange. (Dumbledore had told him, swearing him to secrecy [*Phoenix* 515].)

Neville's actions in this scene, misinterpreted by his grandmother as shame regarding his parents, are caused more by his introverted nature than by his need to guard his privacy. As his impaired mother earnestly gives him a Droobles Blowing Gum wrapper as a gift, Neville slips it into his pocket, quietly defying his grandmother's advice to throw it away. The simple act shows

a great deal about his love for his parents. He places great importance on their role in his life even with their inability to raise him. Their legacy as “highly gifted Aurors,” a talented position which Neville’s grandmother laments he lacks the skills necessary to attain, hangs over Neville’s self-worth. According to Neville, she is always “telling Professor Marchbanks I am not as good as my dad” (*Phoenix* 707). This admission, to Harry, Ron, and Hermione, is followed by an embarrassed Neville staring “fixedly at the floor” (707). His bumbling and shy nature is influenced, in part, by the inescapable memory of unknown and absent parents who were once brilliant in their protection of their son. Neville’s confidence level is connected to this parental gap in his life. Unlike Harry’s parents, Neville’s parents survived their brush with the forces of evil, but were left without their sanity. Neville, then, faced familial instability similar to Harry’s. Neville’s act of filling the parental gap is a two-fold action designed not to replace his parents, but to avenge them by first, facing Bellatrix Lestrange and second, proving himself worthy of his parents’ legacy. Both of these come to pass in the end of *The Order of the Phoenix* and certainly come to fulfillment by the end of *The Deathly Hallows*.

Neville undergoes a “strange and even slightly alarming change” after the news breaks that Lestrange has escaped the wizard prison Azkaban (*Phoenix* 553). All of Dumbledore’s Army works harder after the prison break (it also involved more of Voldemort’s followers), but it is Neville who worked “harder than anyone else in the room,” and improved “so fast it was quite unnerving” (553). It seems as though the motivation Neville needed to overcome his confidence issues came, at least in part, from the knowledge that he might have to face Lestrange, which indeed happens during the climactic battle fought at the end of *The Order of the Phoenix*. The conflict occurs between members of Dumbledore’s Army and Voldemort’s Death Eaters for the

possession of the prophecy. This is a pivotal battle for a number of reasons. First, Harry and his friends engage the dark forces head-on for the first time. Second, Harry's godfather Sirius dies in the battle. Third, it alerts the greater public to Voldemort's return. Fourth and finally, Neville stands next to Harry when Ron and Hermione have been taken out of commission. Neville's involvement in the climactic events of the novel come as something of a surprise to Harry; the company going with him were not entirely assembled by his own choice, but were forced together by Professor Umbridge. In an attempt to garner information out of Harry, she begins to physically intimidate him (and Hermione) when several "large" Slytherin-house students enter with "Ron, Ginny, Luna, and—to Harry's bewilderment—Neville" (742). It is implied that Umbridge ordered the students to bring Ron, Ginny, and Luna, presumably because of their connections with Harry and Dumbledore. Neville, on the other hand, is brought because he "tried to stop me taking [Ginny]," states Warrington, one of the large Slytherin students (742). Neville was not meant to be involved from Umbridge's standpoint, but yokes himself to the fates of Harry, Hermione, the Weasleys, and Luna (who represents the anti-establishment, a character worth a study of her own). Seeing his friends abducted, he acts—to little effect—but he acts nonetheless. This choice continues throughout the events of the rest of the book, especially in similar circumstances: when no one else is capable or willing, Neville chooses to do his best heedless of danger.

Eventually, the group finds itself inside the ministry of magic, where the glass ball containing the prophecy is kept. This is where the book's climactic battle takes place. The prophecy is, in many ways, the impetus for the entire series of novels: it was the cause for Voldemort's attack on Harry when Harry was a baby, which resulted in the death of Harry's

parents, Voldemort's initial defeat, and Harry's infamous lightning-bolt scar. Moments after Harry retrieves the prophecy, Voldemort's followers, the Death Eaters, reveal themselves. In the resulting fight, Hermione is hit by a curse that knocks her unconscious, Ron is hit with some kind of laughing-gas curse that leaves him nonsensical, Ginny breaks her ankle, and Luna is left to care for her. Only Harry and Neville remain capable of fighting even though Neville had been kicked in the face resulting in blood spewing from his nose (792). There comes a point where Harry runs away from his friends, hoping to lead Voldemort's minions away, praying that "Neville would stay with Ron"—and it works when the forces of evil follow him (799). The momentary respite in action is quickly lost, however, as Harry finds himself facing ten enemies at once. As Lucius Malfoy astutely points out, "there are ten of us and only one of you" (800). It is at this moment that Neville once again chooses to throw himself in peril's way: "Neville was scrambling down the stone benches toward them" (800). He shouts from above, "He's dot alone! He's still god be!," or "He's not alone! He's still got me!" had his nose not been bloodied (800). What happens next is a series of events that place Harry and Neville firmly together as the heroic duo: if ever there were a moment when Neville's worth as a sidekick is felt, this is it.

However, the effect Neville has on the immediate situation is close to nothing: he only casts two and a half stupefy charms and is quickly seized from behind. Furthermore, once he is held captive, the focus of the scene shifts. The Death Eaters stop trying to persuade Harry to give up the prophecy out of personal desperation and begin forcing Harry watch his friend undergo torture so he will give up the prophecy—which he does to save Neville. While Neville is being held, his remarkable selflessness continues. Perhaps it was foolhardy to reveal himself to a room full of older, more experienced enemies, but he did it anyway. In this way, Neville is

reminiscent of the American monomythic hero, as defined by Jewett and Lawrence: “a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task” (qtd. in Doty 243). Neville’s greatest heroic attributes are this selflessness and his ability to deny any temptations. Neville never gives in to any temptation offered by the enemy, nor does he engage in “sexually fulfilling activities,” although that may be merely a matter of not following his narrative as closely as, say, Harry’s infatuation with Cho Chang, or Ron’s budding romance with Hermione (Doty 243). Lestrangle, present in the room, announces herself to Neville, as well as wonders out loud “how long Longbottom lasts before he cracks like his parents . . . Unless Potter wants to give us the prophecy” (800). Neville’s response is consistent with his actions thus far: “DO NOT GIB ID DO DEM, HARRY!” as he kicks and writhes to free himself before she gets nearer to him (800). His struggle is in vain, however, as Lestrangle uses the torturing curse on him, sending him “twitching and screaming in agony” on the floor (801). She does not get the chance to continue torturing Neville: as Harry holds out the prophecy, the cavalry arrives.

As the battle begins around him in earnest, Harry’s first act is to get near Neville, who is crawling along the floor. Neville confirms he’s alright moments before Harry is grabbed by the neck and held aloft. As his windpipe is closed, Harry has mere moments to try and save himself. As his options seem grim, Neville *again* comes to the rescue: “he had jabbed Hermione’s wand hard into the eyehole of the Death Eater’s mask” (802). Neville’s triumph does not last long, as another of Voldemort’s followers appears and enchants Neville’s legs into constantly and uncontrollably tap dancing. Neville’s dancing legs ultimately cause the destruction of the prophecy: even though Neville and Harry protect it one more time (Harry tosses it across the room and Neville catches it), the glass ball eventually falls and is kicked by a flailing leg. Only

Harry and Neville see the “recording,” as it were, but they cannot hear the words spoken over the sounds of battle (805). The prophecy, later revealed in full by Dumbledore (as he was the original recipient), reveals Harry was not the only child who embodied the prophesied threat to Voldemort. The prophecy states:

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. . . . Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies . . . and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not . . . and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives . . . (*Phoenix* 841)

Harry’s reaction to this information is to question whether or not the prophecy implies he is the one with the power to vanquish Voldemort. Dumbledore informs him that two children were born at the end of July to parents who had three times escaped Voldemort’s wrath: Harry and Neville. It is fitting, then, that Neville was by Harry’s side when the prophecy’s recording was lost. Additionally, the actions of Lestrage against Neville’s parents now become clear: as Voldemort’s most trusted lieutenant, she was sent to kill Neville while Voldemort went to kill Harry. In fact, the series mentions time and again that it was Harry’s mother’s counter-spell of love that both saved Harry and defeated Voldemort. The famed lightning bolt-scar on Harry’s forehead was a result of his mother’s magic and Voldemort’s demise. Any special powers Harry possesses come from two places: the connection he shares with Voldemort and the love he shares with others (an on-going theme for Rowling). The knowledge of Neville’s potential to contribute to Voldemort’s demise creates a situation of “what if,” namely what if Voldemort had chosen to kill Neville instead—would his mother have saved *him* and created a lightning shaped-scar on

Neville's forehead? Should the series include titles like *Neville Longbottom and the Sorcerer's Stone*? Speculating about the "what ifs" proves generally fruitless, as all retroactive speculation proves to be. This does not stop Neville's growing fan-base from trying, however. A Google search for "Neville Longbottom Alternate Theory" produces about 107,000 results. The number-one hit is a recent fan-fiction about Neville-as-Harry, written by a Tumblr author called "ink-splotch." This particular fan-fiction tries to re-envision the entire series, and has received considerable internet attention, being re-posted by popular-culture sites like "PopSugar.com."

Dumbledore attempts to put these thoughts at rest by telling Harry that when he took it upon himself to kill the infant Harry, and not the infant Neville, Voldemort positioned Harry to fulfill the second part of the prophecy: "Voldemort himself would 'mark him as his equal'" (842). Be this as it may, Neville's involvement in the prophesy continues to make him an increasingly important member of the Harry Potter universe. In fact, the introduction of Neville's role in the prophesy creates a *new* Harry Potter mythos—beyond the saccharine-imaginings of fan-fiction—if you will. This falls directly in line with Doty's consideration of myths as a way to "model possibilities" (Doty 94). Suddenly, the perceived power Harry embodies grows to include Neville: he is a new wrinkle to a now familiar scenario. Doty quotes Jean Houston, calling myth "the coded DNA of the human psyche calling us to refresh the dream" (94). Here, in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling problematizes the uniqueness of Harry's quest. Where Harry was once the lauded, revered, and isolated young wizard who was responsible for Voldemort's first defeat, he now becomes only one potential fulfillment of that dream. Neville exists on a playing field parallel to Harry, brought into the light as a refreshment (and possible

replacement) to the dream of vanquishing evil. At the same time, Rowling also undermines Harry's authority in this matter, at least from the perspective of him as the chosen hero.

The wizards aligning themselves against Voldemort understand Harry's limitations, certainly by the end of the series. What keeps him in the fight, therefore, is his position as figurehead—placed there unwillingly as the object of Voldemort's wrath. The figurehead cannot be replaced without losing its symbolic effectiveness. However, it could be replaced if the new figurehead embodied similarly mythic possibilities, which Neville does. Knowing what “could have been” allows an astute reader (like the aforementioned fan-fiction writers) to recreate the previous four and a half books, placing Neville between the cross-hairs: how would the books play out if shy, pudgy Neville had a lightning-shaped scar, and not the neglected, emotionally stunted Harry? Would Harry even have been brought up by his muggle Aunt and Uncle? (Probably, as Lestrage would have driven the Potters insane.) The worth of these musings, keeping them mere musings and not engaging in full-scale rewrites of wish fulfillment, comes from understanding Harry's precarious position as the prophetic hero as well as recognizing the potential of any of Neville's future actions.

Ultimately, these future actions see Neville rise to co-lead Dumbledore's Army in Harry's absence. This position brings him physical distress at the hands of the Voldemort-loyal “teachers” occupying the school, but does not dissuade him. In the film adaptation of this scenario, Luna Lovegood virtually becomes *his* sidekick. Recognizing that the actions of Dumbledore's Army during Neville's seventh year at Hogwarts occur while the narrative follows Harry, Hermione, and Ron, it is entirely conceivable that Rowling could fill a companion book telling of the trials Neville and the rest of the army experience in the meantime. What we do get,

aside from Neville's hurried recapitulation of his trials, are his actions during the Battle at Hogwarts: Voldemort's siege of the wizarding school. This is Neville's third significant battle. The first was at the Ministry of Magic in conflict over the prophecy, while the second took place in *The Half-Blood Prince* against the Death Eaters who had infiltrated Hogwarts during the events causing Dumbledore's death (599). (This second battle showcases very little about the physical altercation. The fight is short and mainly describes Harry's chase after Snape. Neville and the others who are fighting are given only a few sentences while Harry runs through the area.)

Neville at the Battle at Hogwarts, however, cements his move of separating himself from Harry. Neville's involvement in fighting is equal to all of the other wizards and witches who have gathered to take the final stand against Voldemort, as all involved are given multiple opportunities for valorous action. Neville's part grows significantly, however, when Harry confides in him about the necessity of killing Nagini—Voldemort's huge snake, and the final horcrux. Although Harry secretly heads to the forest to sacrifice himself to Voldemort, he takes the time to entrust this task to Neville: "The idea had come to him out of nowhere, born out of a desire to make absolutely sure" (*Deathly Hallows* 695). Harry's reasoning in bringing Neville into the horcrux hunt (albeit only in part) comes from Dumbledore's example. Harry calls it "crucial" to "make sure there were backups, others to carry on" (696). As he sets out to face his own death, he leaves behind Ron, Hermione, and Neville to finish the horcrux destruction—"now Neville would take Harry's place: There would still be three in the secret" (696). Neville responds without question, "Kill the snake? . . . All right, Harry" (696). It is important to note that Harry does not reveal the reason behind killing the snake, only that it needs to happen,

especially if Ron and/or Hermione fail to do so. Neville's agreement, then, comes on blind faith in Harry.

After Harry's perceived death, Voldemort brings his inert body before the defenders of Hogwarts to gloat over his victory. As Voldemort begins lying about Harry leaving to save himself, Neville charges toward Voldemort and breaks "free of the crowd" (731). He is quickly disarmed. Voldemort gives him the option to join the Death Eaters, but Neville, standing in sight of all of the defenders, shouts, "I'll join you when hell freezes over. . . Dumbledore's Army!" (731). In response, Voldemort summons the Sorting Hat from inside the school, places it upon Neville's head, and promptly sets it aflame. Neville is initially forced to endure the fire, but breaks free at the same time Harry reveals himself and the giant Grawp and some stampeding centaurs bulldoze into the crowd. Neville pulls the hat off, reaches inside, and pulls out Godric Gryffindor's sword: "With a single stroke Neville sliced off the great snake's head" (733). With the final horcrux destroyed, and Harry returned from the spiritual limbo he had been sent to, the battle turns in the heroes' favor: they defeat Voldemort once and for all.

There are (at least) two points of interest regarding Neville's actions before Voldemort. The first is the recognition Voldemort gives him: he calls him by name four times. Seldom in the series does Voldemort call a witch or wizard of "lesser importance" by name. (Although, to be fair, very seldom does Voldemort actually have dialogue.) He speaks of Dumbledore, Potter, and his followers Snape and Lucius Malfoy by name—but never acknowledges other would-be foes like Professor McGonagall, Hermione Grainger, any of the Weasleys, or the like. Granted, Voldemort only ever faces (in dramatic fashion) Dumbledore or Harry. In this case, Voldemort

repeatedly calls the young wizard in front of him by name. Perhaps this occurs simply because of Neville's physical presence, but there seems to be greater fictive resources in play.

Names and the power of affixing meaning to someone or something hold an important place in fantasy. One such example can be found in Madeline L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door*, her second novel in a series of five YA fantasy novels. In "Spiritual Practices Children Understand: An Analysis of Madeleine L'Engle's fantasy, *A Wind in the Door*," Trudelle Thomas defines L'Engle's use of naming as "a mode of knowing" (162). Thomas continues, explaining that in L'Engle's world, "Naming involves recognition; when a person Names another, she compassionately discovers their common ground (shared humanity or shared being-ness). Naming fosters a deep understanding of another" (162). Thomas is careful to explain that while "Naming," in this sense, has less to do with actual names and more with "a way of knowing," to "Name another is to call him into being," which brings with it an indisputable act of power (163). Consequently, then, whether he means to or not, Voldemort exhibits a sense of shared being-ness with Neville. Whether it comes from Voldemort's knowledge of who Neville could have been, or from a haughty sense of over-confidence, Voldemort is simultaneously affirming Neville's existence as he attempts to undermine his role as Hogwarts' defender.

The second point of interest is how Neville pulls Gryffindor's sword from the Sorting Hat. The hat was once a normal hat belonging to Gryffindor, but was animated by the four founders of Hogwarts in order to sort students into their houses after the founders passed away. This occurred over a thousand years ago, according to the hat itself (*Goblet* 176-77). The hat, besides sorting first-year students in several of the books, also acts as a carrier for the sword of Gryffindor—regardless of the actual physical location of the sword. Harry first pulls the sword

from the hat in book two, *The Chamber of Secrets*, when he faced Slytherin's basilisk, finally killing it (319-20). The events within the Chamber of Secrets, then, involve *three* artifacts of Hogwarts' founders: the basilisk, the hat, and the sword.

In Neville's case, he pulls the sword out of the hat even though the sword was nowhere near Hogwarts, indicating both the connection between Gryffindor's artifacts and Neville's need (or worthiness) for the sword. It is determined that Gryffindor's sword is effective in destroying horcruxes because of its use in killing the basilisk—an act which infused it with basilisk venom (*Deathly Hallows* 304). Considering how basilisk teeth destroyed Tom Riddle's diary and Helga Hufflepuff's cup, and how the sword subsequently destroyed the ring, locket, and Nagini—all five horcruxes destroyed by Harry and his allies were eradicated by Slytherin's basilisk. The final inanimate-object-horcrux, Ravenclaw's Diadem, is destroyed by a fiendfyre curse. (In the film version of *Deathly Hallows*, however, the Diadem is first stabbed by a basilisk fang and then thrown into the fire.)

Referring once again to the prophecy, it makes perfect sense that Neville plays such a significant role in defeating Voldemort, especially in regards to killing the snake that serves as Voldemort's most closely guarded horcrux—the one that never leaves his side. It is an interesting mix of wizards and witches that acts to destroy all seven of Voldemort's horcruxes: Dumbledore, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Vincent Crabbe, Neville, and Voldemort himself. That Dumbledore, Harry, Ron, and Hermione destroy a horcrux apiece is no surprise. As the headmaster of Hogwarts and the most celebrated wizard alive, Dumbledore has a role in the second defeat of Voldemort that is surprisingly less than expected. Dumbledore's role, minus the destruction of Marvolo's Ring (*Half-Blood Prince* 303), is more about planning and intrigue than

action. Harry destroys the diary and is involved in the removal of the horcrux inside himself, as well as the death of the physical body of Voldemort (not counted among the horcruxes, but technically a carrier of a part of his soul). Ron destroys the locket; Hermione gets rid of the cup. Crabbe is responsible for the fiendfyre curse that eliminates the diadem. Voldemort ends the horcrux inside Harry, as well as dying from his own rebounding killing curse. Neville, then, is in significant company as a destructor of a horcrux. (The exception is Crabbe, who is unceremoniously denied his role in horcrux-destruction in the film.)

What sets Neville apart is the nature of this series of books. Given that Rowling created seven books, each correlating to a year of Harry's life, readers see all characters age and mature through the series' 4,000 or so pages. Neville is just one of these characters given uncommon longevity. While fantasy series tend to have multiple books, few are popular enough to warrant more than three, four, or five, at most. Those that *do* stretch beyond a tetralogy are adult fare and extend far beyond "only" five books. A quintessential example of this is Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, an adult series that stretched (beyond the author's own life) to fourteen volumes. A YA series with seven, then, is not the norm—although imitators abound since the publication of Rowling's series. In this regard, it would seem wrong of Rowling to neglect the maturation of early supporting characters—wouldn't Harry's friends also spend seven years maturing? However, some characters never develop beyond their initial characterization. Cho Chang is one who remains relatively stagnant: she shows up as a love interest for Harry and spends the rest of the series in the periphery. Goyle, as another instance, began his role as a lackey and ends as a lackey. Even juvenile antagonist Malfoy barely makes it out of adolescence in terms of his on-page growth. Malfoy reaches his apotheosis as a sniveling pawn in the game between Voldemort

and Dumbledore. It must be noted that Goyle and Malfoy are villains—they are not part of Harry’s beloved cadre of friends and associates. To give them enough textual real estate to allow significant maturation would both detract from the heroes’ stories as well as shift the focus away from the singular vision of good versus evil.

Such a shift is evident in the grandiose visions of epics like George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Fire and Ice* (a.k.a. *A Game of Thrones*), where nearly every named character gets substantial back-story, development, an ambiguous allegiance to good or evil, and a chance to provide third-person narration. Nearly all characters in Martin’s universe toe a gray line between good and evil, requiring the reader to reevaluate whether or not to feel sympathetic toward deceit, murder, rape, or incest. But Rowling’s books are not Martin’s: they do not tell the story of an entire universe bent on controlling a single continent. Instead they tell the story of how a boy grew up to finally vanquish a most feared dark wizard. Along the way, Neville achieves what Gene Roddenberry considered “beloved character status”: he has grown beyond any attempt to keep him in the margins (Shatner 296).

Tenar

The path Tenar takes from parental gap to fulfillment and self-realization is quite different from Neville’s. While Neville shows how a sidekick can grow into a hero when given enough time (a sort of literary Darwinsism, perhaps?), Tenar shows something entirely and significantly more substantial. Although Le Guin’s *Earthsea* series is fantasy, like *Harry Potter*, the similarities largely end there. *Earthsea* is a world of high fantasy, where the lifestyle and landscape adhere to the high-fantasy trope of mimicking medieval Europe, replete with swords, castles, superstition, fiefs and lords, and competing religions. The inclusion of dragons, mages,

wizards, witches, magic, dark sorcery, and some ever-present existential struggles with power and death place the five novels in Le Guin's series firmly into this subgenre. (Technically, there are six novels in the *Earthsea* series, but the fifth published book, *Tales from Earthsea*, is a collection of short stories.) While *Harry Potter* also has dragons, wizards, and so on and so forth, it also intermingles with the real, contemporary world, which marks it decidedly as a different subgenre. Because of these differences, and perhaps in spite of them, Tenar presents a much different example of a sidekick leaving the fulfillment of a hero/sidekick relationship to develop further: Tenar's emergence sparks a process that redefines how the *Earthsea* books are governed, read, and studied.

For this purposes of this dissertation, I consider Tenar's beginning as sidekick to Ged, the undisputed hero of the first three novels. The examination of Chapter One of Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* explored Ged's youthful heroics alongside his intellectual-foil-sidekick Vetch. The third novel, *The Farthest Shore*, gives Ged a clearly defined younger sidekick in the young Prince Arren (28-29). Placing Tenar into a position of sidekick is inherently difficult, however, considering that *The Tombs of Atuan*, the second book in the series, is Tenar's story in the same way *A Wizard of Earthsea* is Ged's. Tenar is also entirely absent from *The Farthest Shore*. Book four, *Tehanu*, begins while *The Farthest Shore* ends and then continues the narrative. In this way, *Tehanu* is the most direct sequel in the entire series up to this point. Many years have passed between *The Tombs of Atuan* and *The Farthest Shore/Tehanu*: Ged is now the Archmage of all Earthsea and is described as being much older. Tenar, a young girl in *Tombs of Atuan*, is a widow with two grown children when *Tehanu* begins. To fully understand how *Tehanu* recreates the reader's understanding of Tenar (and of Earthsea, as many other scholars before me have

recognized), I begin by establishing Tenar as Ged's sidekick when they were much younger, in *The Tombs of Atuan*.

Tenar's entire existence is to function as the high priestess in a part of Earthsea geography far to the north-east of where Ged studied on the island of Roke. As a young child, Tenar was "eaten" by the evil "deities" the Nameless Ones in a ritual ceremony: setting her apart from all others as the One Priestess (7-10). She alone is given access and essential dominion over the underground chambers that are the dwelling place of the Nameless Ones. It is clear from the beginning of the story that the Nameless Ones are a potent force of ancient evil. Ged later reveals their existence might best be described as elementals, earth-spirits of darkness (118). Ged comes into the story as an interloper, captured inside the Nameless Ones' subterranean labyrinth when his search for the lost half of the ring of Erreth-Akbe brings him to Tenar's domain. Tenar holds Ged hostage for a good portion of the novel. She does this against the wishes of her self-seeking overseer, Kossil (76). Ged is the first man Tenar has ever laid eyes upon, as all males living within the cloistered temple area are eunuchs. Tenar keeps Ged alive because of her fascination of him, although she is not entirely able to explain that fascination. Tenar holds the upper hand, but is emotionally and socially under-developed compared to Ged (which makes sense considering her youthfulness and seclusion). Her commitment to leaving behind her life comes only after Ged helps her fully realize how manipulated she has been (125). Ged continues, offering her a choice: "Either you must leave me, lock the door, go up to your altars and give me to your Masters; then go to the Priestess Kossil and make your peace with her . . . or, you must unlock the door, and go out of it, with me" (126). The choice is something foreign and impossible for Tenar to even fathom. Her position as Priestess (a clearly brainwashed one at that)

does not allow her to consider leaving; her soul has been “eaten” by those she serves. Ged recognizes the power of the Nameless Ones, but reveals that, while still “stronger than any man,” they are far from the gods she has believed them to be (125). Furthermore, Ged offers her something she has never truly had before—open and honest trust:

But I thought also of another thing between us. Call it trust . . . That is one of its names. It is a very great thing. Though each of us alone is weak, having that we are strong, stronger than the Powers of the Dark . . . I have trusted you from the first time I saw your face . . . You have proved your trust in me. I have made no return. I will give you what I have to give. My true name is Ged. (127)

As previously mentioned, the power of names is paramount in Le Guin’s series. To offer one’s true name to another is to give them potential dominion over you—it is an act of the highest trust. In their article, “Le Guin’s Earthsea: Voyages in Consciousness,” Craig and Diana Barrow liken the mutual trust shared between Ged and Tenar as “a symbolic wedding,” one occurring simultaneously with the restoration of the ring of Erreth-Akbe, “each bringing the other’s half . . . as Ged reveals his true name” (Barrow 35). Ged revealed Tenar’s true name to her pages before, reminding the Priestess Arha (as she has known herself to be, meaning the “Eaten One”) that her name was once Tenar (105). The trust that Ged sees and offers asks Tenar to join her fate with his: trusting that he can help deliver them both out of the darkness and into freedom. When Tenar tells Ged, “I will come with you,” she agrees to become his partner in flight (127).

It can be argued that neither Ged nor Tenar are hero nor sidekick as they might more accurately be described as captive and captor-turned-admirer. What cannot be ignored, however, is the chasm separating the two in terms of knowledge, confidence, and experience; in any other

situation, Ged would be the hero, Tenar the sidekick. Or perhaps not: maybe their roles are not so clearly defined. Holly Littlefield, in “Unlearning Patriarchy: Ursula Le Guin’s Feminist Consciousness in *The Tombs of Atuan* and *Tehanu*,” suggests that those who believe Tenar “must be rescued from her fate” take a “fairly simplistic interpretation” of the text (248). Littlefield rightly points out:

When a fifteen-year-old girl single-handedly manages to outwit, entrap, and control the most powerful wizard in the land, it should be obvious that she is not a simpering, helpless female needing some knight in shining armor to rescue her. In fact, her strength is in many ways equal to or even greater than Ged’s. (248)

That fact Ged finds a powerful ally and counter-part in Tenar is indisputable, and Littlefield quotes Ged’s confirmation of the power Tenar inherently possesses. However, even Littlefield must admit that Tenar needs Ged to serve “as a catalyst” for her journey out of her enslavement (248). As this external catalyst, Ged becomes the hero in their early partnership, if for no other reason than how he saves her at the last moment. Tenar falters at the precipice of freedom, succumbing to the power of the Nameless Ones once more, seeing Ged’s face as “black and twisted like a demon’s” (136). Ged says quietly, “by the bond you wear I bid you come, Tenar,” and breaks the spell for good (136).

The choice to cling to one another in a time of need also brings Ged and Tenar into the realm of hero and sidekick. As *Tehanu* later shows, this connection is further deepened in the future. Tenar trades all she knows (a precious choice, regardless of how limited her experience has been) for freedom with Ged. The parallels between *Tombs of Atuan* and the ancient tale of Jason and the Argonauts cannot be ignored. (For the record, the other obvious parallel is with

Theseus, Ariadne, and the labyrinth [Barrow and Barrow 36].) Tenar (as the Medea figure) gives up all she knows to give the foreign hero an object of great power and then leave with him.

While Tenar does not follow Medea's ultimately tragic path, Ged, like Jason, leaves her after they gain their freedom. Tenar confesses her sins to Ged, asking him to leave her behind on some forsaken island to live in exile (160). Ged counter-offers to introduce her to the kingdom as the one by whom "an old evil was brought to nothing . . . the broken was made whole, and where there was hatred there will be peace" (161). After this, Ged would let her live with his old master Ogion on the island of Gont, where she might live and learn in peace (162). She asks Ged if he will come as well, to which he responds "When I can I will come" (162). The book more or less ends there, and the reader does not see Tenar again until it is revealed in *Tehanu* that Goha, the widow who cares for the burned child Therru, is the grown-up Tenar (17).

Tehanu does a great-number of things in the world of Earthsea beyond simply continuing Tenar's story. Most significantly, it is a strong-feminist text, asking troubling questions about patriarchal power, female inequality, and justice for the marginalized. In doing so, it also begins theorizing about the true nature of magic within Earthsea: who has the right to perform magic, and what is the right way to do so? In his article, "The Last Dragon of Earthsea," Peter Hollindale describes this fourth volume: "*Tehanu*, famously, is a feminist revisioning of Earthsea, in which Le Guin appeared to deconstruct her much-loved world" (185). Hollindale mirrors what Barrow and Barrow mentioned years before when stating that *Tehanu* "deconstructs the first three volumes of Earthsea, since Le Guin now must feel that she had overemphasized male power through romance and magic" (42). This is, indeed, exactly what Le Guin set out to do. In reference to her decisions in writing *Tehanu*, she wrote, "I couldn't continue my hero-tale

until I had, as woman and artist, wrestled with the angels of the feminist consciousness . . . instead of the pseudo-genderless male viewpoint of the heroic tradition, the world is seen through a woman's eyes" (*Earthsea Revisioned* 11-12).

In this viewpoint, the three main characters, Tenar, Therru, and Ged, all go on journeys of self-discovery. As an older woman, Tenar still holds prestige for her role in the events of *Tombs of Atuan*, and still holds the potential to work magic; but she fights and resents the power that others have (or pretend to have) over her. Littlefield states that "as a middle-aged woman, [Tenar's] eyes have been opened, and she finds herself repeatedly questioning and condemning the laws, traditions, and policies that have caused women to be second-class citizens in Earthsea" (251). This new awareness and questioning eventually leads her to be instrumental in the changes that come in this book and the next, *The Other Wind*. Therru has an aura of magic about her, and hints abound as to her eventual revelation as Tehanu, the child of dragons; but she lives in fear of the man who beat her, raped her, and threw her into a fire to die. Ged comes back to Gont after he heals the rift between life and death and seats Arren on the throne of Earthsea; but he has been stripped of all magic in the process and must learn how to live life without it. The story is told almost exclusively from Tenar's point of view, akin to *Tombs of Atuan*, making *Tehanu* the second volume of her story—just as *The Farthest Shore* was the second volume to Ged's story begun in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. *Tehanu* begins these kinds of questions and not all of them find answers. Some answers come in the collection of short stories, *Tales from Earthsea*, while others finally come into focus in *The Other Wind*. However, *Tehanu* marks a turning point in the series and Tenar plays the pivotal role in that turning.

There are a number of ways to consider Tenar in this text. Among other things, she is a widow, a lover, a biological mother, an adoptive mother, an adoptive daughter, a healer, a guide, a confidant, a warrior, a dragonlord. Perhaps the most overarching and powerful way to look at Tenar is to look at the almost schizophrenic-existence she has through her many names (remembering the importance fantasy places on names and the like): Arha, Tenar, and Goha. Each name means something else, and all three almost seem to have a different personality and purpose. Susan McLean, in “Women in Le Guin’s *Tehanu*,” suggests Le Guin based “Tenar” on the French *tenir*, or the Italian *tenere*, “both of which come from the Latin *tenere*, ‘to have, to hold, to keep’” (112). This meaning fits Tenar in both books, especially as she keeps Ged captive in *The Tombs of Atuan* and holds Therru as daughter in *Tehanu*. Goha, as defined in *Tehanu*, means “a white spider,” which McLean considers an “appropriate symbol of women as artists and homemakers, people who make connections” (113). Goha, as a long-time resident of Gont, has made a home and a connection with the people there. Although Tenar is her dominant identity (“to have and to hold”), Goha and Arha seem to be talking and trying to exert themselves as the dominant identity. While not moving into a full-blown deconstruction study of Tenar’s names, the nature of naming, words, and magic in Earthsea (that all things are known by what they are and by what they are not) cannot be overlooked.

The use-name of Goha brings with it all of the restrictions and subservience of a village widow. As Goha, Tenar plays the part of subservient house-wife and middle-aged farmer. She demurs to the whims of dignitaries and mages as befitting her identity as “a mere goodwife” (92, 114). Arha comes back into her identity after Tenar is partially cursed by the tale’s other antagonist, the evil mage Aspen (122). Although able to partially thwart Aspen’s attempt to

silence or cripple her (perhaps he meant to kill her, but the text is unclear as to the curse's nature), Tenar finds it hard to concentrate, speak, and think clearly for some time. She finds, however, that she is able to think in her native tongue. To do so, she relies on her identity as Arha:

Who she had been long ago, to come out of the darkness and think for her. To help her. As she had helped her last night, turning the wizard's curse back on him. Arha had not known a great deal of what Tenar and Goha knew, but she had known how to curse, and how to live in the dark, and how to be silent. (123)

The entire text keeps Tenar bouncing back and forth between her identities. Arha helps her survive when she must face powers of darkness and fear. Goha allows her to interact with the people in the villages, but fails her when her son returns from life as a sailor/pirate and treats her like his maid/property (205). Tenar, her true identity, interweaves with and uses her use-identities, allowing her to grapple with the way women have been excluded from the use of magic (52), to take a stand against evil men intending to rape and kill her and Therru (169), and to finally bind herself to Ged as lovers (189).

Tenar's ability to utilize different elements of her identity to deal with different scenarios mirrors reality, as it is well documented that people utilize different personas and masks as needed to interact with others, all with different margins of success (Wardhaugh and Fuller 256-57). In this way too, *Tehanu* breaks with established Earthsea traditions. In *The Tombs of Atuan*, Ged told her "You must be Arha, or you must be Tenar. You cannot be both" (126). It would seem that contrary to this ultimatum, Tenar *can* be both—must be both and more than both—when she needs to be. In fact, when remembering how Arha is the child who "has no name" in

her service to the Nameless Ones, Tenar has three names and yet no name all at once to serve her as she needs (Le Guin, *Tombs of Atuan* 125). Hollindale similarly sees Tenar as a conglomeration of personas and powers. He writes of “Tenar’s several roles”:

She is confidante to Ogion dying. She is “midwife” to Ged’s anguished ordinariness; emasculated of his celibate wizardries, he is initiated by Tenar into male sexuality and love. She is Tenar of the Ring, the King’s friend and mediator. . . Above all, she is foster mother of the abused child Therru, who is dragonchild, least and greatest of Earthsea children. (186)

Many of the roles Hollindale isolates are Tenar’s roles, as Ogion, Ged, King Arren, and Therru all know her by her true-name, although Therru perhaps knows her best as “mother,” as the chapter told from her perspective reveals (Le Guin, *Tehanu* 219). Hollindale also mentioned Tenar’s interactions and humiliations at the hand of Aspen, most of which she endured as Goha, but ultimately it is as Tenar that she helped in his defeat (186).

She is not alone in this, as we see Ged do something very similar. His use-name has long been “Sparrowhawk.” After returning from his sojourn apart from the people of Gont, he shortens his use-name to “Hawk.” This is not a major change, but “Hawk” implies, among other things, that this character is stronger, and perhaps not sparrow-sized or -powered any more. He is no longer linked to the identity of the Archmage he once was and can now no longer be. He also has a new version of himself to present to Tenar as her lover. In one very real and tangible sense, he has created a mature version of Sparrowhawk through which to experience the world anew. From Tenar’s discussion with Aunty Moss it is revealed that male magic-users (sorcerers, mages, etc.) live lives of celibacy. Tenar is shocked at this thought, as she now must acknowledge the

fact that Ged, quite possibly for the first time in his life, might have sexual urgings. Moss suggests that some believe there is a spell to cast away thoughts of sex, and describes them as spells of binding, so that no wizard might be tempted to use his power to fuel his lust (97-98). The connection between male-magic users, celibacy, and the Catholic church's institution of a celibate, male priesthood cannot be mistaken. If the men trained at Roke are the priests of the higher power of Earthsea, then the women who are barred from studying there are relegated to be "only" witches—lowly nuns, as it were (although none would care whether they stay celibate). However, as Hawk and Tenar come together as lovers, the notion of Ged's celibacy disappears, as does any residual obligation Tenar might have to a dead husband. Their union also fundamentally changes the dynamics of any future hero/sidekick relationship between them. This new reality must also accommodate the continued fostering of Therru, who considers Tenar her mother, and Ged her father (219).

From the beginning of Ged's return to Tenar's life, their relationship is obviously not what it once was. For nearly the entire book, he needs Tenar more than she needs him. He needs her when he arrives sick and comatose. He needs her when he begins his long physical and mental recovery. He needs her when he must hide from the outside world. He needs her when they consummate their relationship. In the absence of magic, Ged is entirely in Tenar's debt because he does not know how to navigate a world without magic. Aside from one moment when he comes back in time to stab one of her would-be attackers through the abdomen with a pitchfork, Ged submits himself to Tenar's choices and guidance. In this way, Tenar holds the role of hero. She is the self-sufficient power that cultivates future growth and influence (in both Ged and Therru). At times she does not even keep a sidekick, as Ged and Therru leave and come

by her guidance and request. Tenar, when it is all said and done is a new kind of sidekick (although as Le Guin continues to publish *Earthsea* texts, it may not be over for some time). She did not stay mired in slow-moving development though story arc after story arc like Dick Grayson, languishing until the long-awaited day when the perennially youthful sidekick finally gets to . . . go to college. Nor did she continue on statically like Jeeves, Watson, or Bess Marvin/George Fayne: never changing or growing through countless volumes of adventures. While the changes undergone by Neville follow a path similar to Tenar's, his story as the "would-be Harry" merely hints at the radical redefinition Tenar brings to the understanding of her entire world.

The "secondary hero" is the form of "sidekick separation" that occurs when sidekicks take part in narrative space ample enough for them to emerge in their own heroic roles. This is usually showcased in narratives that take place over multiple novels or through an extended publication history. The sidekick grows beyond the initially established hero/sidekick relationship, and in light of the parental gap, moves into a space where such a relationship no longer fulfills the needs of the character. Neville Longbottom is given considerable literary territory in the *Harry Potter* series, bringing him from merely a laughable schoolmate of the hero to someone stalwart and confident who stands on his own merits. Tenar similarly separates herself from the hero with whom she first appeared, but eventually pushes the understanding of how the very fabric of the *Earthsea* universe works. Chapter Four continues the study of the different forms "sidekick separation" can take. I will next focus on the "sidekick sequel," when sidekicks become the heroes of a storyline either separate or parallel to the original in which they first appeared.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIDEKICK SEQUEL

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I established the prevalence of sidekicks in YA and other literatures, the critically and narratively important roles sidekicks take on in their relationships with their heroes, and ways sidekicks interact within gender-specific standpoints and specific family relationships. The resultant “sidekick separation” often takes one of three avenues, the first of which was the focus of the previous chapter—the “secondary hero.” This chapter will establish the second avenue, the “sidekick sequel,” the way in which an author places the spotlight specifically on a preexisting sidekick. This is the next logical focal point for this dissertation, as it moves outside and alongside the existing narrative tradition established for heroes and sidekicks.

This second way I argue YA allows the sidekick to separate from his or her hero comes from evaluating characters who first exist as sidekicks to a story’s protagonist, but then get a literary reincarnation as protagonists of their own stories. This happens in a number of ways, most typically when a follow-up novel is told from the point of view of the sidekick. Remember that Twain took this very approach when he followed *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, taking a once-sidekick and turning him into the focus of his own novel—helping to establish this tradition some one hundred and forty years ago. Another notable (and more recent) repositioning is Beverly Cleary’s *Ramona the Pest*, the second book in the much loved *Ramona* series for elementary-school-aged children. The first in the series, *Beezus and Ramona*, was nine-year old Beatrice’s (Beezus) story about living with her younger sister Ramona. The little sister then becomes the focal point of the rest of the series. Beezus and

Ramona, as characters, were *themselves* spin-offs from the *Henry Huggins* series. This type of interconnectedness between stories occurs elsewhere in literature: take William Faulkner's use and reuse of Yoknapatawpha County and how Stephen King tied so many of his novels to the *Dark Tower* series. A less typical approach is to retell the original tale from the differing vantage point of the sidekick—an approach often referred to as a “parallel novel.” While, again, not an entirely new idea, the parallel novel has proven considerably attractive to contemporary authors. For instance, E. L. James, author of the controversial *Fifty Shades* series, published *Grey*, a retelling of book one from the perspective of Christian Grey (“*Grey*”). Stephanie Meyer intended to publish *Midnight Sun*, a parallel novel to *Twilight*, but stopped short of a full publication when early chapters were hacked and released on the internet in 2008 (“Midnight Sun”). Cinema has even given popular culture its fair share of parallelisms, as one needs to look no further than Robert Zemeckis' *Back to the Future* trilogy, as *Part II* interweaves new action and characters through scenes and scenarios from the first film. For this chapter, I offer two sidekick case-studies from parallel novels. The first is Shay from Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series and the two graphic novels *Shay's Story* and *Cutters*. Shay helps to establish a deeper look into how YA utilizes a sidekick within a parallel novel. The second is Bean from Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow*, who offers a more complex and in-depth consideration of how YA uses the parallel novel to help the sidekick emerge beyond the parental gap.

Shay

Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* series (comprised of *Uglies*, *Pretties*, *Specials*, and *Extras*), is a rather recent addition to the world of YA (book one was published in 2005). In the series, Westerfeld considers questions about identity and self-worth in an increasingly complex and

technological society. In particular, the series overtly questions how adolescents derive self-worth in connection to their physical appearance. The world of *Uglies* is a science-fiction dystopia placed some 300 years in our future, another example of the recent obsession with this YA subgenre. Physical appearance reigns supreme, beginning when children are moved out of their homes into the dormitories of Uglyville. There, the children, now referred to as “uglies,” impatiently await their sixteenth birthdays when they will undergo mandatory surgical enhancements to make them “pretties.” Pretties are obviously obsessed with being pretty, which, aside from a perfect physique and beautiful facial features, includes some combination of drinking, partying, eating, downing calorie-burning packets (to offset the eating), and hooking up with other newly attractive pretties. By and large, the populace does not give the surgery or these behaviors anything more than a cursory glance: it is entirely expected and normative. In “Nick, Tuck, or Else,” Joel Stein et al. provides some statements given by Westerfeld in reference to the series’ prescience regarding today’s society:

This is the first generation that thinks about plastic surgery as almost a given . . .
They’re the first generation to grow up with the idea that plastic surgery is neither superexpensive nor a weird thing that only the maladjusted would do. The idea that the body is this thing you are given and you can’t escape it—that no longer holds. (Stein, Steinmetz, and Borowiec 46)

Westerfeld’s contention that one can now escape the body he or she is given forms the foundation for *Uglies*, at least as far as the controlling government allows. An individual’s discretion regarding plastic surgery might be entirely free, but the ability to choose one way or

another for a reversal of the surgery falls entirely under the discretion of a dystopian government: it is the major form of controlling the populace in this case.

When this dystopian element inevitably comes to light, it reveals that when uglies go under the knife, they unknowingly receive intentionally mind-numbing brain damage. Again, while the damage is used as a form of conditioning, it is changeable and reversible for those who are an asset to those in control. This fictional premise is not new, as these things hardly ever are. Take, for just one example, “Harrison Bergeron,” Kurt Vonnegut’s short story about a government handicapping all individuals in an effort to achieve equality. Further parallels can be seen in the 1995 made-for-TV movie of the same title, starring Sean Astin and Christopher Plummer. In this version of the story, Harrison accepts an invitation to join the unaltered, unhindered ruling government. Eventually, after his lover Phillipa undergoes a forced lobotomy, he rebels in an effort to awaken the intelligence of the greater population, stating “You haven’t made everybody equal, you’ve made ‘em the same, and there’s a big difference” (*Harrison Bergeron*).

In a familiar dichotomy in fictive dystopias between open revolution or flight to freedom, uglies from Westerfeld’s series run away from the city to begin their own way of life free from the cultural and physical restrictions of living a beautiful but shallow existence. These uglies are called Smokies, as their settlement is named “the Smoke.” The conflict of the series comes from Smokies who return to the cities to entice others to leave the pretty life behind—something that main antagonist Dr. Cable tries to stop by any means possible. Tally Youngblood, the protagonist, is an interesting main character because of her reluctance to leave Uglyville—her entire focus is on reaching age sixteen and going under the knife. Kimberly Downing Robinson,

in a review of book one, remarks that Tally is “completely unaware that she is standing on the threshold of the archetypal ‘hero(in)’s journey” (151). Tally’s unawareness of her potential as the hero enables the most important relationship in the *Uglies* novels: her friendship with Shay. Unlike Tally, Shay is acutely aware of the watershed quickly approaching, and takes her opportunity to run away. Before she does, she tries to open Tally’s eyes to the possibilities beyond being pretty, and it is her investment in Tally that ultimately convinces her to “leave home for ‘a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life giving elixir’” (Robinson 151). For Tally, it is a recovery of what has been lost: Shay.

Shay’s role in the series is the on-again, off-again counterpart to Tally. Some reviewers refer to Shay and Tally as “frenemies,” defining their relationship in the series as one of affection and conflict regarding their feelings for one another (Westerfeld, Grayson, and Cummings; Peterfreund 42). Tally and Shay’s existence as an on-again/off-again duo over the course of *Uglies* and *Pretties* drives the narrative forward. Again, Tally impatiently awaits the day she can enter life as a pretty. It is this desire that allows her to be manipulated, time and again. In *Uglies*, Tally leaves to find the Smoke under coercion by Dr. Cable, who uses a two-pronged attack to force Tally to track down Shay and the Smoke: Cable insists that Shay has been tricked into leaving, and she withholds Tally’s surgery until her return. Tally agrees that Shay must have been brain-washed in order to leave, a theory stemming mostly from their ongoing conversations about whether or not to travel away from the city. Tally’s inability to convince Shay to stay in Uglyville also brings an element of guilt into the equation. When she finally makes it to the Smoke, it is her relationship with Shay that causes Tally to delay betraying the Smoke’s location

to Cable. Shay and Tally rely and confide in each other until the introduction of a love interest for Tally—which is when Shay gets tossed to the side, for the first but not last time. As Tally’s de facto sidekick, Shay might best fall into the devil’s advocate or intellectual foil roles. *Uglies* follows Tally’ from a limited omniscient third person perspective, so the need for a narrative gateway does not apply. Instances of comic relief are few and far between in the entire series: obviously a byproduct of its dystopian nature. The devil’s advocate and foil roles are evident with the realization that Shay is everything Tally is not. While Tally longs to be pretty, Shay desires to stay unaltered. Tally agrees to deliver the Smoke to Cable, while Shay bitterly resists any influence from the administration. Finally, Shay finds almost-boyfriends in David (*Uglies* 228-29, 287) and Zane (*Pretties* 23), only to lose them both to Tally, one after the other. In this way, then, Shay comes dangerously close to an embodiment of the antagonist-as-sidekick—a topic I have chosen to save for a later study.

Tally and Shay spend remarkably little time together, all things considered. Aside from the weeks they spend in the beginning of *Uglies* (covered in a few, cursory chapters), they are confined to a conversation here, a conversation there. Those opening weeks, however, firmly establish their interdependence for the rest of the series. Tally wants to embrace the pretty culture while Shay plans to run away. The bulk of the narrative covers Tally’s relationship with David, especially after the Smoke is discovered and disbanded. While Tally and David are on the lam, however, their overarching concern is for David’s parents, Shay, and the other Smokies that were captured. Shay is almost constantly on Tally’s mind even though Tally is not always with her.

One of the reasons *Shay’s Story* and *Cutters* are of increasing interest, then, is how they fill the gaps of Shay’s narrative when Shay is separated from Tally. *Shay’s Story* re-frames the

timeline of *Uglies*, giving life to Shay's background while bringing her story into communication with Tally's. An important difference to note here is *Shay's Story* is a graphic novel, while the original series is not. The difference brings both a consideration of a fixed, visual medium as well as a deepening understanding in the nature of Shay's character. The sequel to *Shay's Story*, titled *Cutters*, continues this new narrative by giving Shay's perspective during *Pretties*. (As of this writing, a third graphic novel to complement book three, *Specials*, has not been published. Considering how much time Shay and Tally spend together in *Specials*, it might not be necessary to reveal Shay's perspective.) In *Shay's Story*, we learn about Shay's early relationship with Zane, before either reached age sixteen. There was a kinship between the two of them long before either met Tally. Shay and Zane later pick up where they more or less left off, making Tally's interest, manipulation, and betrayal regarding Zane all the more potent. Zane was Shay's—and only Shay's—once upon a time. Of similar interest is Shay's time spent at the Smoke before Tally arrives: she saves a fellow runaway from drowning in a river, works hard to tame the land for use, and impresses the usually unflappable David. Although Shay's romance with David is somewhat ambiguous in *Uglies*, it finds foundation and intimacy in *Shay's Story*. David tells her his big, personal secret: he was born outside of the ugly/pretty civilization. David tells this to Shay right before he kisses her. (Not to call David a one-trick pony, but he follows a similar approach when he romances Tally.)

There are also significant fictive revisions being made here, as David's explanation for leaving Shay behind in Uglyville gets amended in *Shay's Story*. Originally, in *Uglies*, he tells Tally that Shay "chickened out," citing her desire to leave the city was because "her friends were." Furthermore, he states "I almost told her to just forget about it, to stay in the city and

become pretty” (*Uglies* 237). *Shay’s Story* reveals that David did, in fact, tell her to stay in Uglyville. David writes Shay a note, telling her “I know you’re in love with me, and that’s the wrong reason to leave home” (Westerfeld, Grayson, and Cummings 9). The eventual implications of this note are far-reaching. First, because the specifics of David’s letter to Shay are never shared with Tally, and Shay never offers to tell her this side of the story, the contradictory information is never brought to bear. Had Shay informed her of David’s duality, Tally might have approached the Smoke’s greatest son with more reserve. Second there is the question of David’s character: he is, at least in this one instance, a liar. Considering the impact resulting from David’s relationship with Tally, a relationship where David is the pillar of virtue, any instance that might disrupt their union would seem potentially catastrophic. Unlike Tally, the reader knows about this black mark on David’s character, and it changes the reading of the entire series. Third, Tally and Shay might have bonded more completely if the whole truth had been told.

Fourth, and somewhat outside the scope of the text itself, is to question how much “right” an author has on revising works with or without an attempt to publish a new edition. One such revision that is largely accepted (and generally forgotten) is what J. R. R. Tolkien did in *The Hobbit*. In an effort to bring the actions of Bilbo Baggins into greater alignment with the vision of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien produced the revised edition of *The Hobbit*, complete with an explanatory paragraph in the opening pages (Tolkien, *The Hobbit* 9). These revisions included various alterations of passages dealing with the Ring, such as the famous “Riddles in the Dark” chapter. If there was ever an outcry as to the changing nature of *The Hobbit*’s text, none exists today. However, there are other situations where a change is met with significant audience

opposition. Perhaps the most notable is George Lucas's decision to make Greedo shoot first in the Cantina shoot-out scene opposite Han Solo in the 1997 special edition of *Star Wars: A New Hope*. Unlike with Tolkien's changes, Lucas's changes are largely reviled and are under on-going contention.

However unpopular revisionist actions can be, considering them brings me back to the central question of this chapter: what happens when an author makes changes to a central story by using a parallel novel focusing on a sidekick? One by-product is to affect any scholarship that may have come between publications. Take for instance, what happens when considering the narrative structure of these sets of Westerfeld's stories. Because of how completely *Uglies*'s narrative structure follows Tally, much of Shay's actions, beliefs, and thoughts are left to the imagination during the principle novels. This partly creates narrative tension as it leaves an element of the unknown to both Tally and the reader (as all good first-person or limited-omniscient narratives do). The resolution of this tension comes when revelation occurs; Dr. Cable reveals her hidden manipulations of Tally and/or Shay, or David's mother shows Tally the cure to the brain-lesions, and so on and so forth.

The absence of Shay's part of the narrative will lead some readers and critics to do one of two things: take Tally's assumptions and conclusions at face value, or read between the lines in an effort to understand Shay's motivations. One such critic, YA author Robin Wasserman, takes the latter approach. Wasserman's essay "Best Friends for Never" offers a close reading of the series in an effort to show how overlooked and undervalued Shay is in an initial read-through. Wasserman argues that Shay is "not a sidekick, she is a hero. A hero with the misfortune to be trapped in someone else's story" (20). Throughout her analysis, written before *Shay's Story* was

published, Wasserman creates a compelling case: throughout the first three books, Shay shows initiative, loyalty, and insight. Tally, on the other hand, makes terrible decisions, gets forgiven for them time and again, and betrays her friends and values for the sake of her physical attraction to David and Zane. Wasserman puts it this way: “Shay blazes a trail for Tally, right up the side of a mountain. Shay extends a hand to Tally, and helps her to the summit. Shay and Tally admire the view . . . then Tally pushes Shay over the cliff. Lather, rinse, and repeat” (21). Throughout her analysis, Wasserman makes it clear that Tally owes a considerable amount to Shay, but Tally nonetheless repeatedly betrays her in one way or another. Tally’s heroics, therefore, are based on stealing ideas and recognition from Shay. This potentially places Shay into a number of character roles. Maybe she is the hero, as Wasserman points out that “the very thing Tally *pretends* to do—while in reality being blackmailed by Dr. Cable—Shay actually *does*” (24). Or perhaps she is the older, wiser figure offering guidance to the hero: “Again and again, Shay figures things out and then explains them to her best friend . . . Shay is just smarter” (22). Or all of this does not add up, and Shay remains Tally’s sidekick after all.

Another YA author, Diana Peterfreund, offers a similarly-themed evaluation of Shay’s relationship with Tally. In response to fans’ advocating for being on either “Team David” or “Team Zane” (a play on fans’ affiliation with either Team Jacob or Team Edward in the love triangle debate from *Twilight*), Peterfreund suggests a third option for Tally’s romantic affections: “Team Shay” (53). As Wasserman has to fill in the blanks with Shay’s motivations, so too does Peterfreund offer an interpretation of the series’ events through her own specific lens. Although she recognizes that any suggestion or innuendo regarding a romance between Tally and Shay would largely be ignored or refuted, Peterfreund nevertheless presents what-might-be,

at least if we considered the possibility of attraction between the two amidst the plethora of suggestive dialogue and scenarios. She begins by rightly establishing that Shay “cares very deeply about what Tally thinks of her” (43). Referencing the times when Tally tried to create computer-generated versions of what Shay’s face would look like post-operation, Peterfreund asserts that it is “desperately important” for Shay that Tally “like her for he she is” (43). She takes the notion further, marking how Tally is “*fantasizing about Shay’s* [potential new face],” and asks the reader to consider what Shay’s reaction might be if she knew that “Tally is thinking about her so much?” (44). Admitting that her thesis is largely grounded in intellectual fancy, Peterfreund maintains an exaggerated tone when discussing the romantic implications of Tally and Shay’s friendship. However, exaggeration aside, Peterfreund draws from a considerable amount of textual evidence supporting her position. In fact, if it were not for Shay’s admission that she was upset over Tally’s “stealing” of David, Peterfreund would not need to admit intellectual indulgence. This instance may very well be the only supporting evidence for Shay’s heterosexuality found in the first three books. While looking at the changing nature of the relationship, Peterfreund considers Shay’s motivations at the end of *Pretties* when she helps Dr. Cable turn Tally into a Special. As a new Special herself, she has been given the opportunity to bring Tally into the fold of a newly established (and somewhat above the law) group of Specials: the Cutters (*Pretties* 346; *Specials* 3-5). In this case, romantic notions notwithstanding, Peterfreund makes a compelling argument:

Now, however, Shay knows exactly what she is doing. She tried being friends with Tally. It didn’t work. This time, she wants more. She wants to possess Tally and subjugate her completely. If status is what Tally wants, if what will make

Tally love Shay is status, then Shay will shove status down her throat. She will be better than David, the leader of the Smoke; better than Zane, the founder of some silly, pretty clique. Not only will Shay be a Special, but she'll also be in charge of an elite team of Specials. And on the off chance that Tally still doesn't fall into line after being dazzled by what Shay has become, well, she'll force it on her.

(48)

The context of Tally's change into a Special and the rest of the narrative in *Pretties* support Peterfreund's suggestions. A friendship with Tally as equals has not benefited Shay; it has instead caused the destruction of the Smoke, the forceful operation turning Shay into a pretty, and the disruption of the ignorant bliss that accompanies that change. Tally has twice left Shay's friendship behind in order to spend time with the leader of their social spheres. She alienates Shay and opens up deep emotional distress leading to self-harm. As Shay brings Tally into the world of Specials, all of this changes: Shay is the one in charge. They no longer share equal status. If Tally were to spend extra time with the leader of her social group, it would be with Shay.

Some of what Peterfreund and Wasserman postulate regarding Shay's behind-the-scenes actions is later disproven in *Shay's Story* and *Cutters*. However, these two critics have essentially tried to do what Westerfeld does in his parallel graphic novels: create a back-story to fill in the narrative gaps. Moreover, they have entered into a conversation of intellectual inquiry in the face of ambiguous scenarios within the text. Westefeld's choice to publish the parallel graphic novels allows him to revisit the series, bring Shay into focus as a counter-protagonist, and retroactively remove the ambiguity allowing Wasserman and Peterfreund to offer varied readings of his text.

The attention given to Shay in these new novels, however, suffers from its inability to escape from Tally's storyline and break new ground. Everything that happens in *Shay's Story* must coincide with what happens in *Uglies*. The only new substantive information or drama provided by *Shay's Story* is the specific nature of Shay's romance/non-romance with David. Before having had the benefit of reading *Shay's Story* (2012), Wasserman (2009) goes to great lengths in her suppositions considering David's treatment of Shay and their relationship, recognizing David's tendency toward duplicity and self-delusion when it comes to Tally and Shay. Wasserman points out that although David is "so disgusted with Shay" and her decision to not leave Uglyville the first time, he "somehow fails to notice that . . . Tally chickened out on her first chance" (31). Continuing on, Wasserman asks what David's motivations might have been in involving himself with Shay romantically "*in the first place?*" if he felt so strongly that Shay was "a pathetic follower" and a "coward" (31). While some of those postulates are again, disproven, when read in light of *Shay's Story*, considering they were made on soon-to-be-outdated information, Wasserman can hardly be held accountable. So too are Peterfreund's suggestions disproven when reading *Cutters*, but only in part: although Shay is forced to change into a Special, her misinterpretation of Tally's motivations remains, as well as her desire to bring her back into good graces. The way *Shay's Story* (and *Cutters* for that matter) is hindered in its ability to strike out on its own will strike a chord with popular culture enthusiasts, as George Lucas's second Star Wars trilogy famously suffered from the same restrictiveness. When viewers (or readers) know the inevitable outcome, what power does the conflict have? Westerfeld's graphic novels lack this power. However, *Ender's Shadow*, my second example of this kind of parallel novel, does not.

Although completing Ender's principle story almost twenty years ago, Orson Scott Card continues to publish new additions to the science fiction novels comprising what is known as the "Enderverse." He began with *Ender's Game* in 1985 and wrote a parallel novel to that original story in 1999 titled *Ender's Shadow*. *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow* fit perfectly into the debate on defining YA, as the subjects of these books are children, but what happens to them is a far cry from what constitutes normal childhood development. Andrew "Ender" Wiggin begins the story told in these two books at age six. The students he works and trains with are treated like soldiers, complete with officers, uniforms, and battle-simulators. Ender even encounters physical threats, resulting in his killing two older bullies in self-defense. He is ultimately the commander who successfully leads an interplanetary strike force against untold billions (if not trillions) of alien creatures, destroying their home-world and eradicating their species—all before he turns twelve. Using children as weapons of mass destruction brings on-going ethical questions into play, and the debate surrounding *Ender's Game* continues even while its leadership and tactical qualities have helped it become required reading for members of the United States Marine Corps (Amos par. 9). Card himself has gone on record regarding this debate, stating, "I have never written a single piece of YA fiction . . . my work has never been marketed that way until Tor put a YA cover and a new ISBN on *Ender's Game* . . . long after it had become popular with young readers" (Card, "Looking Back"). The novel has been noted to complicate the very definition of YA as it is "providing and almost immediately beginning to dismantle a framework that ostensibly distinguishes children and adults . . . [offering] greater insights into the instability of these distinctions and implicitly highlight[ing] the overlapping spaces between them" (Day 212).

The duality between the portrayal of children and adults through *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow* finds its beginning, at least in part, in the advanced mental capacities of the novels' protagonists.

In the original and first novel, *Ender's Game*, Ender leads a group of students in a series of war games intended to prepare them for a forthcoming war against an alien species named the Formics. His sidekick, Bean, is included in this group. To be fair, Bean is Ender's sidekick in that he is the only character who even remotely fulfills this role. Ender's teachers intentionally isolate him in hopes that his leadership abilities will grow out of necessity. Bean, as one under Ender's command, is capable of achieving a lasting relationship based on physical vicinity alone—but not one seemingly based on equality, as could have been the case with Ender's peers Alai and Petra. Ender fosters Bean's education as well as confides in him. Apart from Ender taking confidence in Bean, there is little in *Ender's Game* to suggest a more evenly-distributed reciprocal relationship between the two boys. (In *Ender's Game*, much of Ender's relational development involves how he interacts with his sister Valentine.) The change in relationship comes with *Ender's Shadow*. Like *Shay's Story* and what it does to *Uglies*, *Ender's Shadow* retells the plot of *Ender's Game* from Bean's perspective. This provides an intriguing contrast to Bean's positioning alongside Ender: even as he is the protagonist from the book's point of view, he is very clearly Ender's sidekick. (Card wrote both novels in a third-person, limited-omniscient point of view, but chooses to focus the narratives on Ender and Bean, respectively.)

To say that Bean becomes a hero merely by "getting his own book" is far too simplistic. As has often been the case, having one's own book does not make one a hero (or a sidekick, for that matter). What makes Bean's narrative in *Ender's Shadow* unique from the standpoint of

hero/sidekick pairings (and uniquely different from Tally and Shay) is the level to which the partnership is changed after the publication of the parallel novel. In a footnote to her study “Orson Scott Card’s *Ender and Bean: The Exceptional Child as Hero*,” Christine Doyle notes that the second novel “does alter, or at least disturb, many readers’ views of Ender” (317). Doyle attributes this to the book’s effectiveness and “power,” even supplying anecdotal testimony from young adults who had “a preference for Bean and *Shadow* because of a dislike for what they perceive[d] as Ender’s ‘weakness’ in both books” (317). Doyle presents this dislike as an opportunity for further study, and while this dissertation does not look into why readers might view Ender’s occasional indecisiveness or empathy as weakness, I am very much concerned with the shift regarding a reader’s view of Ender. To that end, Bean could have easily languished in sidekick purgatory throughout the duration of *Ender’s Shadow*. Instead, Card uses the opportunity to create a cyclical relationship between Ender and Bean, allowing both to occupy the position of hero in their actions. Bean firmly chooses to position himself in the sidekick role, a decision he makes logically, understanding where his weaknesses lie in light of Ender’s strengths. However, this decision is made with the full knowledge that he *could* surpass Ender as the hero if he so desired. Again, as a way of contrast, Shay never had the opportunity to choose her role as sidekick (although that gets somewhat complicated in *Specials*.) Like the other graduates of Battle School, Bean applauds to choice of Ender as his commander. Until this decision (and to a certain extent even afterward), Bean is regarded as humanity’s backup plan: if Ender fails in any way, Bean would be called upon to take over. In fact, it is made clear that those in charge fought to keep Ender as the chosen savior of humanity instead of Bean. Faced with the decision to embark on his own, facing the “parental gap,” Bean chooses to remain.

Looking first at what *Ender's Game* has to offer in terms of Bean's role as sidekick, Bean proves himself a highly competent individual—even at his young age. He apparently first meets Ender when he is assigned to Ender's first command in Battle School: Dragon Army. As seen from Ender's perspective, the reader finds that Ender unwillingly (and almost uncontrollably) chooses to isolate Bean from the rest of the army. Ender realizes his actions, but continues to set Bean apart in an unconscious attempt to raise him above the rest of the "soldiers," albeit at the expense of the others despising Bean. Ender knows they may easily resent the younger, smaller recruit. Ender asks himself, "Why am I doing this? . . . making one boy the target of all the others?" (*Game* 161; in-text citations from *Ender's Game* and *Ender's Shadow* are abbreviated to *Game* and *Shadow*, respectively). During the first practice session of Dragon Army, which is also their first encounter, Ender calls upon Bean four times to give intelligent answers to his questions—bringing attention to him while setting him apart from his fellow soldiers. At the end of the session, Bean asks Ender for a platoon command, stating: "I can be the best man you've got, but do not play games with me" (*Game* 165). Ender responds to Bean's request for responsibility with, "I made sure they *all* noticed you today. They'll be watching every move you make. All you have to do to earn their respect now is be perfect" (*Game* 166). In this way, Ender has set up a scenario for Bean that mirrored his own rise to command—excellence by means of isolation. All the while, Ender asks himself, "Why had he done to Bean what had been done to Ender by commanders that he despised?" (*Game* 167). After some introspection, Ender answers his own question: "I am hurting you to make you a better soldier in every way. . . That's why they brought you to me, Bean. So you could be just like me" (*Game* 168). Although he recognizes the commander/soldier dynamic he has been placed in with Bean, Ender almost

defiantly ends his inner soliloquy with, “But I’ll be watching you, more compassionately than you know, and when the time is right you’ll find that I am your friend, and you are the soldier you want to be” (*Game* 168). In their article on the link between Card’s novels and the genre of the “school story,” Doyle and Susan Louise Stewart also comment on Card’s pattern of isolating the students with more potential. While their ultimate intention is to investigate how Card shifts a school story into the postmodern, they offer many helpful insights into the complimentary nature the books have. In their example on isolation, they write that although the strategy “of isolating Ender, then Bean” is “torture for both,” the boys eventually recognize that the absence of such isolation would allow them to integrate themselves into the “the rest of the gang” (Doyle and Stewart 191). What are needed, therefore, are not integration and duplication, but isolation and invention: “the battle ahead requires them to be extraordinary” (Doyle and Stewart 191). Ender marks Bean as someone to join him in extraordinary achievement as early as their initial interaction.

The next significant back and forth between Ender and Bean comes after Ender’s army wins its second battle in one day—a battle that was nevertheless stacked against them. That night, Ender sends Bean a private message, “See me at once” (*Game* 195). Bean goes down the corridor to Ender’s personal room. Inside, they converse about the nature of the Battle School and about why students like themselves were brought up and advanced at such an early age (*Game* 196). Ender asks Bean, point blank, why they made him a soldier so young. Bean answers, “Because they need us, that’s why. Because they need somebody to beat the buggers. That’s the only thing they care about” (*Game* 196-97). Ender answers, “It’s important that you know that, Bean” (*Game* 197). As they continue talking, Bean realizes that whether or not he

meant to, Ender has brought Bean into his room to confide in him—to share some of the struggle that he faces as the chosen hero of the impending war. As Ender is speaking, “Bean looked at him and realized that the impossible was happening. Far from baiting him, Ender Wiggin was actually confiding in him. Not much. But a little. Ender was human and Bean had been allowed to see” (*Game* 197). Ender has brought down his defenses in front of one of his soldiers for the first time since coming to the battle school. There had been instances where Ender shared friendship and camaraderie, certainly, but never a moment of unveiled vulnerability. Ender has invited Bean into a new level of relationship, a place where no one else had ever (nor would ever) be invited while the world looked to Ender to lead the next war.

Sara K. Day offers an interesting view regarding the reasons behind Ender’s choosing Bean as his “right-hand man” (217). Day points out that not only does Bean think “like a soldier, devising strategies and intuiting the opponents’ weaknesses,” which Ender certainly finds useful, but Bean also exhibits additional traits Ender finds perhaps even more admirable: “Ender ultimately seems to align the qualities he notes in Bean—including, notable, *goodness*—as traits associated with adulthood” (217). The overarching purpose of Day’s article is to explore how the relationship between childhood and adulthood is problematized in Card’s novels: “Card examines, blurs, and even eliminates the lines that are frequently drawn between ideas of children and beliefs about adults” (224). Day suggests that one of these lines is truth-telling; while the adults always tell half-truths or ambiguities, and the children tend to despise these behaviors, the children themselves also lie, “often just as easily as adults do, and especially Ender himself” (220). The point in recognizing Bean’s “*goodness*” as a further exemplification of adulthood is to bring Bean into a position of value and emulation. He is one who can

“simultaneously embody childhood and adulthood:” he is, “like Ender, . . . a personification of border areas . . . able to be understood both as a young child and already an adult” (Day 217). Ender sees Bean as one who can positively reinforce his own areas of inadequacy. Part of this is his goodness, and another part is his intellect and cleverness.

While Bean’s attributes and goodness (though undoubtedly complicated by *Ender’s Shadow*), might be one reason Ender chooses Bean, others have been offered. Tim Blackmore suggests Card meant the text as a “replacement for the military paradigm” through the fictional focus on “the warrior who lives inside it” (125). As part of this goal, Blackmore states that “Bean is the catalyst for Ender’s ambivalence about his life as a warrior” (137). Blackmore bases this claim on the way Ender treated Bean in their first encounter, creating the same isolation he similarly experienced. Eventually, Ender admits that he “had never, except perhaps with Bean, used his power to hurt someone” (*Game* 245; qtd. in Blackmore 138). This admission, according to Blackmore, marks a “massive upheaval in Ender’s paradigm” (138). Perhaps it was an unconscious decision for Ender to isolate Bean in the manner in which he did, but it was definitely a deliberate action to bring Bean into the fold as a sidekick. Recognizing Bean’s impact in Ender’s paradigm shift from a warrior to a peace-maker certainly explains Card’s reasoning in making Bean a sidekick.

Whatever the reason, be it qualities of goodness or the actions as a catalyst, once Bean has been brought into Ender’s confidence, Ender gives Bean the assignment to think outside of the box, to “be clever,” and “think of solutions to problems we haven’t seen yet” and gives him a list from which to hand pick a special squad for training (*Game* 198). As their conversation has lasted past the lights-out time limit, Ender allows Bean to stay the night in his cabin—another act

revealing his trust in the new relationship. This scene hints at the level of experience shown in this passage during *Ender's Shadow*. This dual telling of the Ender-Bean relationship makes it one of the more pivotal scenes regarding them. It is also significant because it is told from Bean's point of view (at least, from a third-person point of view following Bean). Bean is successful in his assignment, as he is in all things presented to him. Dragon Army becomes the only undefeated army in the history of the battle school, and Ender is graduated early to be sent, unprecedentedly, straight to command school. Bean is with him when he gets the order to leave the battle school, but the two of them do not see one another for some time; it is not until Ender begins controlling actual space battles that they reunite. Bean's involvement in that part of the narrative is relatively inconsequential¹, at least, that is, until reading it from his point of view in *Ender's Shadow*.

When Card writes *Ender's Shadow*, everything Bean attempts takes on a deeper significance, and Card paves the way for an even stronger argument for how Bean-as-sidekick evolves into something more meaningful. Bean's newly-supplied back-story establishes that he was a stolen embryo whose genetics were altered to give him incredible intelligence at an impossibly young age (*Shadow* 173). This accounts for his outstanding performance during his time at Battle School, and this enhanced intelligence gives Bean insight into the goings-on of the Battle School, as well as an understanding of global politics and interplanetary tactics. What Bean lacks, however, are the interpersonal skills of the other students. Bean notices, time and

¹ Bean's role in the film version of *Ender's Game*, released in 2013, is similarly inconsequential, suggesting that the filmmakers chose not to align their version with the expanded characterization of Bean provided by *Ender's Shadow*.

again, that Ender has the ability to demand the best from his soldiers while still remaining a figure of respect and compassion. Bean concludes that it is innate in Ender, and it is something he could never hope to learn or reason into. The recognition of these innate talents helps Bean bring himself closer to Ender.

The reader also learns in *Ender's Shadow* that Bean's relationship to Ender began long before he ever served in Ender's army. Upon arriving at Battle School, Bean finds himself constantly being compared to Ender. At first, he is unsure whether or not the comparison is a hindrance or an advantage. His mind is finally made up when he must make a decision about his future. During an exploration of the air intake system, Bean discovers his genetically enhanced nature by eavesdropping on a conversation between his teacher, Dimak, and the commander of Battle School, Colonel Graff (*Shadow* 180-83). Graff questions Bean's legal status as a human, suggesting Bean's mysterious genetics make him as much of a threat as an asset. When he returns to his bunk that night, Bean comes up with a plan to assuage any fears Graff might have over his status as a human: "His perfect camouflage . . . quelling their fears and bringing him both safety and advancement. He had to become Ender Wiggin" (186). To develop his interpersonal skills in light of Ender's example, Bean engages in a number of social experiments. The most important thing he does to become Ender, however, is to hand-pick the roster making up Dragon Army. Dimak invites Bean into his office and confronts him about his hacking of the teachers' computer system. Instead of a reprimand, however, Dimak puts Bean's intellect to the test: build a hypothetical army out of unseasoned students and/or those assigned for transfer (217-19). Bean tests Dimak by asking whether or not he can put himself into the commander's position and guesses from Dimak's reaction that the hypothetical army is a real one, and is

intended for Ender. Dimak admits nothing, but it is obvious that Bean has indeed guessed the assignment's true intention; he compiles the list and submits it.

Of those included in Ender's misfit army, two students are of note. The first is Bean himself. While it might have seemed extremely unlikely for Bean not to add himself to Ender's army, he does have the option either way. However, since this assignment comes after his decision to hide behind Ender, to "become" him, sidling up to the older soldier makes perfect sense. The other notable inclusion is Nikolai, Bean's only friend. In the same way that Ender only chooses to confide in Bean, Bean only chooses to confide in Nikolai. (This exclusivity makes sense, considering Bean's initial lessons in trust were broken by his first real adult guardian, Sister Carlotta [*Shadow* 79]). Nikolai is described throughout the book as merely an average student among the very gifted attendees of Battle School. Elsewhere he might have stood out, but in a school of geniuses, he struggles with the schoolwork in the classroom and the tactics in the battle room. Bean vacillates on the issue of adding Nikolai, judging Nikolai's abilities to be behind the others chosen, but knows what the opportunity would mean. In the end, he adds him simply because, as he says to himself, "I want him" (224). Nikolai more or less fits into a sidekick role for Bean, fulfilling the space of friend and confidant, as a sense of reliance gradually occurs between them: sometimes even a sidekick needs a sidekick.

To solidify their connection further, it is revealed to the reader that Nikolai is the child from whom Bean was cloned: they are brothers, genetic twins aside from Bean's alteration. After this fact comes to light (to the reader, not to Bean or Nikolai), Nikolai has a conversation with Anderson (another Battle School teacher) in which Nikolai describes his relationship with Bean: "sometimes he's the little brother and I am looking out for him, and sometimes he's the big

brother and he's looking out for me" (262). Anderson then suggests that Nikolai and Bean are friends, but Nikolai corrects him with, "I told you. I am his brother. Once you get a brother, you do not give him up easy" (262). In many ways, this interchange is a moment of sentimentality for Card. A few scant paragraphs after unveiling Bean's true genetic identity, one which the reader would already have connected to Nikolai, Card gives Nikolai an opportunity to take ownership of Bean as an older brother without an awareness of their biological connection. With the exception of the family reunion at the end of the novel, Nikolai has no role to play in the greater battle against the Formics: his narrative ends when Bean gets sent to Command School.

Until Bean walks into Dragon Army's barracks, the only meaningful relationship he has is with Nikolai. Once he enters the barracks, however, he meets Ender for the first time. From the privileged narrative standpoint of *Ender's Shadow's* narration, it is Bean who has always had the advantage over Ender: he is smarter, more wary of the leadership, has done more investigating regarding the nature of Battle School, and has already guessed the true intentions of the next Formic altercation/war—although he has allowed himself to be misled regarding this fact (154-55). Bean also knows he himself has hand-picked Ender's entire army for him—stacking the deck in Ender's own favor as much as possible. All of this is in spite of the fact that Ender remains a mystery to Bean in person, in ability, and in myth. In many ways, although Bean constructs the army in such a way as to give *himself* as much potential as possible under Ender's leadership, Bean's actions are based in the faith he has in the Ender mythos—he has staked his own chances on what he has heard about the incredible Ender Wiggin. Throughout *Ender's Shadow*, there is an unmistakable aura of hero worship around Ender. Adding even more to this aura/mythos is the *literary* mythos surrounding Ender, stemming from his role and

writings as the Speaker for the Dead (the subject of other *Ender's Game* sequels). If the reader has already read *Ender's Game*, he or she already knows the outcome of all the major plot scenarios regarding Ender. The tension over whether or not Ender will survive the mental strain of his "training" is gone, as is the shock of the revelation that Ender has fought and won an actual war instead of a simulation. What the reader of *Ender's Shadow* gets instead are the aloof musings Bean gives regarding his guesses as to Ender's mental processes. These musings, what Bean refers to as "his private theology," are what create the intrigue of *Ender's Shadow*: because the plot is (probably) already known by the reader, the real drama lies in how Bean's psychological and philosophical study of Ender in turn drives the development of their partnership (244).

The drama of this study comes to the forefront again when looking at Bean's perspective of his first conversation with Ender: the one in which he asks for a toon command. After the conversation, the dialogue of which is taken almost verbatim from *Ender's Game*, Bean (by way of the narrator) reflects on the encounter: "today he found out that all this time Wiggin didn't even know Bean existed. Everybody compared Bean to Wiggin—but apparently Wiggin hadn't heard or didn't care" (244-45). Up until this point, Bean has operated under the reputation his intelligence has built for him, as the most intellectually revered student in the entire school. Suddenly, Bean's carefully (and intentionally) created protection means nothing. This reversal actually supports Bean's private theology: the object of his study and devotion (for it can be considered as such) would cease to exist if Ender acted in any manner that might undermine that created image. Although Bean admits surprise and disappointment in Ender's actions ("Unlike you, Wiggin, I *do* give the other guy a chance . . . you screwed up with me today" [244]), Doyle

and Stewart liken Ender's behavior toward Bean (and eventually that of Bean toward his own troops) as a natural by-product of his new role as a teacher. They consider this as part of Ender's coming to "understand and accept some of the principles that guide these former 'enemies' they have now joined. Adopting some aspects of the 'status quo' becomes essential in order to accomplish their larger purpose" (193). Ender's larger purpose is to take his army and help it reach its potential. It is logical, then, that he employs tactics he has undergone himself. Their first face-to-face meeting actually upholds the expectations Bean held about Ender, whether Ender knows of them or not. Bean expected to find a colleague who could finally engage him on his level of higher function. Instead, he found someone who demanded excellence without discrimination; a teacher who would never give away his dominance or leadership for anything less than successfully achieving his purpose. Bean does not find the possibility for equal partnership: the best he can hope for is to become his new teacher's most trusted subordinate—his sidekick.

Bean finally achieves this trusted position with Ender when he is called into his room to receive the "think outside the box" assignment. Looking at this moment from the extended version found in *Ender's Shadow*, three newly unique pieces of the story come to light. The first is the revelatory moment where Ender lets his guard down. In the retelling, after "Ender was letting Bean see that he was human," the narration adds, "Bringing him into the inner circle. Making [Bean] . . . what? A counselor? A confidant?" (297). Both titles hold differing connotations. To call Bean a "counselor" would put him in a position of power or authority over Ender, if only momentarily. To properly council Ender, Bean would need the authority to potentially instruct him in an advised course of action. At the very least, it makes them peers—

allowing for a back and forth exchange of ideas and information. A “confidant,” on the other hand, might hold any level of power within the relationship, depending on the sensitivity of the information at hand. If Bean has, in fact, been made Ender’s confidant, he has been granted a level of intimacy beyond the other soldiers as his commander trusts him enough to keep their conversations secret.

The second unique piece established in this retelling is Bean’s choice to keep himself in the sidekick role. Up until now, even with Bean’s mythification of Ender, there has been tension regarding whether or not Bean would surpass him. Because of his increased intelligence, Bean knows about his role in the Battle School, his rank or his high regard in the eyes of the faculty: some consider him the second-best hope after Ender, others consider him the best before Ender. Here, however, in Ender’s room, Bean admits his inadequacies in leadership. He thinks:

I’m glad enough that the burden is on Ender, . . . because I have more confidence that Ender can bring it off than that I could. Whatever it is that makes men love the commander who decides when they will die, Ender has that, and if I have it no one has yet seen evidence of it. Besides, even without genetic alteration, Ender has abilities that the tests didn’t measure for, that run deeper than mere intellect.

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Bean not only contemplates his shortcomings as a leader, but also postulates regarding Ender’s unmeasurable qualities: that which “makes men love the commander who decides when they will die.” Doyle and Stewart similarly weigh in on Ender’s ability as a commander, citing his “deep empathy” as the driving force behind why “his troops follow him” (192). If it is, indeed, Ender’s empathy that makes him a great commander, then their pairing makes perfect sense: Bean is the

analytical genius, while Ender is the emotional connection. Doyle and Stewart also recognize how this empathy requires everyone to keep Ender in the dark regarding the actual war: the fact that “he understands the foe” also means he “could never go into battle willing to win at all costs” (192). In this way too, Bean’s advanced intellect allows him to recognize where Ender’s skill surpasses his own. It proves a significant enough difference that Bean chooses to follow Ender. Before entering into his cabin that night, Bean had been using Ender as the means to several ends: survival from the persecution he faces from the faculty as a genetically modified human, as well as searching for someone among his classmates who might recognize his own abilities for leadership.

The third change to the retelling of this scene in *Ender’s Shadow* is Bean’s continued reflection upon his new assignment (or assignments, as the narrative suggests). While he contemplates potential advantages of the use of stupid tactics in the battle-room, Bean also realizes he now has a role in the tactics outside of the battle-room: he must help protect Ender from the threat of physical enemies. Bean sees that he “can help” Ender where it truly counts: in the battle against the Formics. He determines to forsake “geometry and astronomy and all the other nonsense” in order to find time to research how animals “wage war”—especially “hive insects,” as they are Earth’s closest living parallel to the Formics. This is a result of Bean’s more intellectual perspective on the matter at hand, as well as Ender’s insistence that Bean know the true reasons behind Battle School. The other real (and in many ways, more immediate) threat to Ender is the hatred Bonzo (one of the aforementioned bullies) has for him. Bean, having experienced this kind of animosity when “growing up” on the streets of Rotterdam, knows first-

hand the danger Ender faces. He determines to “watch [Ender’s] back” as best as he is able (301).

This passage is even more unique, from a narrative standpoint, as it is the only “shared” scene in both books that does not include a version from Ender’s point of view. This moment is the lone instance of Bean’s point of view in *Game*, and that view expands in *Shadow*. In judging Bean’s status as a hero, then, we have a one-sided view of the exchange, as all others have Ender’s thoughts from *Game* and Bean’s from *Shadow*. An interesting element of Doyle and Stewart’s study included side-by-side excerpts from the two novels, placing Ender on the left and Bean on the right. They contend that such a practice allows the reader to “see how Ender and Bean complete each other” (196). While they do not specify how exactly Ender and Bean complete one another, Doyle and Stewart do recognize that “both construct similar facades in order to establish their authority, but when they separate, those facades collapse and each boy is left trembling, further isolated, angry, and disillusioned” (196). It is clear that the similarities stemming from the two characters’ viewpoints do bring the two of them into closer connection.

In light of such similarity, an intriguing plot point is the inability to judge Bean’s guesses about Ender’s motivations or conclusions in this meeting. Card, to the point of annoyance, constantly allows Bean to mentally work his way through all possible outcomes to a given scenario, weighing what other factors could be at play, and how other people might react—all in an effort to show Bean’s heightened mental prowess. The problem with this cognitive approach, especially in the moment where Ender confides in Bean, is Bean’s inability to judge emotional or irrational decisions (with the exception of thinly-veiled anger, like in the case of Bonzo’s anger toward Ender). This one interchange between Bean and Ender—again, completely from Bean’s

point of view in both novels—hides all chance of looking into Ender’s compassionate thought processes. Perhaps, though, this hiding of Ender’s thoughts is not problematic; it is intentional on Card’s part to preserve the sanctity of Ender’s innermost perceptions regarding Bean. Hiding part of Ender’s consciousness from the reader promotes a mystery similar to the personal religion Bean bases around the legend of Ender.

In light of the lack of revelation regarding Ender, the scene where he leaves Battle School for Command School is the first of the two most pivotal in terms of Bean’s sidekick relationship with Ender and thus for the elevation of such a relationship. Right before Ender leaves for Command School, he leads his army in their final battle. This fight, as told in *Ender’s Game*, pits Dragon army against Griffin and Tiger armies: the first battle against two armies at once. Ender goes into this battle in an emotional daze. Earlier that day he had fought his way out of an ambush by Bonzo, in which Ender unknowingly killed the hateful older student (*Game* 211-12). Going into the army battle, Ender thinks, “I am sick of the game. No game is worth Bonzo’s blood pinkening the water on the bathroom floor. Ice me, send me home, I do not want to play anymore” (*Game* 215). From this emotional perspective, Ender tosses out all of the rules (after a suggestion from Bean), uses the forsaken strategy of a battle formation, and breaches the enemy gate before immobilizing all of their forces (*Game* 216-18). The narration tells the reader nothing regarding how this plan comes together, other than, “Ender grinned. ‘OK. Why not. Let’s see how they react to a formation.’ Bean was appalled. ‘A formation! We’ve never done a formation in the whole time we’ve been an army!’” (*Game* 216). All moments that follow, including the victory, seemingly belong solely to Ender and his brilliance. After reading the same battle from *Ender’s Shadow*, however, there are some significant changes to this scene. First of all, the level

of Ender's melancholy is deepened to the point where he would be "allowing himself to be part of a screen of frozen soldiers, pushed through the battle by someone else, [it] was as close to sleeping through it as he could get" (*Shadow* 342). The screen is a part of the formation Ender chose to employ, but there again is another change: "As it turned out, Ender's plan was to use another of Bean's stupid ideas . . . a screen formation of frozen soldiers" (*Shadow* 342). In giving Bean the credit for the strategy, Card also omits Bean's incredulous reaction to the suggestion to use a formation. Finally, after Ender decides to ride along as part of the screen, he "left everything up to Bean to organize. 'It's your show,' he said" (342). One soldier calls Ender's actions as "trust, Bean old boy," but Bean inwardly thinks: "That's despair" (343). Bean promptly carries out his plan, including personally assuring the victory in the end (344). In this final battle, therefore, Bean is not only the sidekick to the hero, he *is* the hero outright: Ender has quit mentally, physically, and emotionally. This variant perspective is entirely found in *Ender's Shadow*; if the parallel novel didn't exist, the brilliance and credit would remain with Ender.

In the immediate aftermath of the battle, Dragon Army's toon leaders and their seconds are all promoted. Bean finds himself as the new leader of Rabbit army. The Dragon Army barracks are in disarray in light of eighteen of the army's leaders transferred to command other armies. While this continues, one of the toon leaders, Fly Molo, comes to Bean (with the other toon leaders in tow) and states, "Bean, somebody's got to tell Ender . . . We thought . . . since you're his friend. . . ." (349). Even though this stuns Bean, he reasons, correctly, that only he "had been taken inside Ender's confidence," and that in the eyes of his fellow soldiers, he was "the closest thing to a friend they had seen Ender have since he got command of Dragon" (349). Bean acknowledges this fact and goes to see Ender, when Ender is receiving his orders to go to

Command School. One new point (exclusive to *Shadow*) comes to light in this moment. As Ender leaves his room, he pauses: “He turned to Bean, took his hand. To Bean, it was like the touch of the finger of God. It sent light all through him. Maybe I am his friend. Maybe he feels toward me some small part of the . . . feeling I have for him” (291). Remembering Bean’s private theology, his on-going study of the Ender mythos, equating Ender’s touch to “the finger of God” falls right in line. The moment of intimate physical connection, something that had never before been mentioned or alluded to in either novel, acts as a passing of the torch, or the laying on of one’s mantle. The parallels between this moment and Elijah’s passing of his mantle to Elisha moments before being brought into heaven are numerous (2 Kings 2:9-14). Bean ends the scene in private reflection, concluding: “Ender gave [his life] meaning” (292).

Although Bean spends time at Battle School without Ender, as well as passing time traveling to meet up with him (and others) at Command School, the final essential moment between the hero and the sidekick comes in the final battle Ender fights. Card designs this ultimate battle, the attack on the Formic home world, after Ender’s last battle in Battle School. Ender is similarly broken when he comes to this point: exhaustion and frayed nerves have led him to despair once again. He sees the imbalance of power, his own “eighty fighters, against at least five thousand, perhaps ten thousand enemy ships” (*Game* 292). His mind tempts him to quit, “I do not care anymore” and “You can keep your game. If you will not even give me a chance, why should I play?” (*Game* 293). What brings him into action is hearing Bean’s voice: “Remember, the enemy’s gate is *down*” (293). Ender decides to mimic his actions in Battle School. He groups his forces and sends them on a suicide mission toward the planet—where he

uses a molecular weapon to destroy all matter on the planet as well as all of the surrounding ships (295).

Bean's involvement in this scene, as shown in *Ender's Shadow*, is significantly more than what it first appeared. In the chapters leading up to the final battle, Bean's role in the battles grows in both reach and authority. Graff tells him that "It's all the more important that you watch everything. Be there for him . . . you're his backup" (440-41). The other children in Ender's command were "finally becoming aware that Bean was following the whole battle, not just his part of it," causing them to pass along much needed "honor of others" (442). When the final battle commences, and Ender hesitates, those in control offer Bean the command: "A light blinked on . . . all he had to do was press a button, and control of the battle would be his. They were offering it to him, because they thought that Ender had frozen up" (447). Bean waits, however, and wisely so. Although he understands the implications of the real battle before them, he has no plan, no course of action, and does not see how they could successfully get the molecular weapon in range of the planet (449). Bean offers his advice about the enemy gate as an ironic joke meant to reflect the impossibility of the situation ahead. Ender takes it and runs with it, however, to the stunning success of the entire war. Bean still has one more moment of impact, as he tells one of the final two ships able to set off the weapon to do so within his own ship; without this guidance, the suicide run would have likely failed (454).

Bean refuses to see his role in the decision-making, telling Graff after the fact, "I only knew that I had no plan at all . . . Maybe it made him think of a plan. But it was him. It was Ender. You put your money on the right kid" (457). Graff responds with "I think perhaps you pulled each other across the finish line" (457). Graff's words undoubtedly summarize the

purpose behind *Ender's Shadow*: layering a counter-narrative within the original that creates complications and alterations as it retells a familiar story. Bean has become unique in this sense, as he was not only Ender's sidekick, but in refusing to take over the hero's role, he essentially sacrificed his own chance at glory. Bean becomes the sacrificial hero by *not* becoming the hero. Card has used the parallel novel to create a new avenue for the sidekick. Doyle and Stewart spend considerable time arguing their assertion that Card took the school story, a "highly traditional form," and deviated from the traditional "structural conventions in significant ways" (186). Some of these ways include a "highly unusual narrative approach," "utilizing multiple voices within the novels in innovative ways," and that "the teachers are seen as complex characters" (186, 192).

In addition to these innovations on the school story, Card also shows innovation when it comes to treating sidekicks within a closed literary universe. The in-depth exploration of Bean in a parallel novel not only gives complementary material to augment the experience of reading the original story, but changes the very nature of that story and of his and Ender's characters. Westerfeld did something similar with Shay and Tally in the *Uglies* series, but stopped short of where Card took the idea. Westerfeld gave Shay two graphic novels; Card has published three extensive sequels to *Ender's Shadow*, with a fourth sequel forthcoming. Not to mention Marvel comics' on-going series of comics based on Ender and Bean's time at Battle School, begun in 2008. Both authors, writing within the past sixteen years, have tangibly demonstrated how a well-executed parallel novel can help a sidekick become more than what was once originally intended in terms of characterization.

The sidekick sequel shows how a sidekick separation can occur when an author retells the original narrative from a sidekick's point of view. As illustrated through *Shay's Story* and *Ender's Shadow*, the resulting counter-narrative or para-narrative can deepen the initial story line by building intricacies within characters who were not previously at the forefront of the narrative. Chapter Five will continue this increasingly complex treatment of the sidekick as it looks at entirely original stories told from the sidekick's point of view.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE META-NOVEL

The beginning part of this dissertation highlighted how sidekicks in YA and other literatures took on critically and narratively important roles in their relationships with their heroes. After showing ways through which sidekicks interacted within gender-specific standpoints and specific family relationships, the investigation logically moved on to three ways how those relationships evolved and/or split. I argued for the first “sidekick separation” in Chapter Three, how the “secondary hero” grew within a large body of literature. Chapter Four’s focus was the second separation, the “sidekick sequel,” and moved the consideration alongside previously established chronologies by retelling the original story from the sidekick’s perspective. I will argue in this chapter that the third and final form of “sidekick separation” is perhaps the most structurally revealing of the three forms. This “meta-novel” is an increasingly popular genre for today’s YA authors, as it moves the primary narrative point of view to that of the sidekick, beginning a new and unique story outside of the tradition established in Chapters Three and Four.

The “meta-novels” studied in this chapter are recent YA works with a first-person point of view protagonist telling his or her tale as a sidekick to a caped-superhero. These texts present a paradox: a sidekick as the focus of his or her own novel while nevertheless functioning as a hero’s second. While this closely resembles Conan Doyle’s use of Watson as the narrator of the bulk of the Sherlock Holmes stories, there are three important differences. One, Watson is never truly the focus of the tale—Sherlock is; two, Watson is a grown man, not a young adult; three, Sherlock is a detective, not a super-powered, caped crime-fighter (although similarities do exist).

The primary meta-novels studied in this chapter are Jack Ferraiolo's *Sidekicks*, Auralee Wallace's *Sidekick*, and John David Anderson's *Sidekicked*. Two of Anderson's other novels, *Standard Hero Behavior* and *Minion*, would fit in nicely as similarly themed texts and could easily offer continued insight into this world from more angles. *Standard Hero Behavior* is a high-fantasy sidekick novel, and *Minion* is a villain's sidekick's tale taking place in the same literary universe as *Sidekicked*.

All of these texts, in one form or another, deal very directly with the parental gap established in Chapter Two. As was the case with texts studied in Chapters Three and Four, each brings a new kind of wrinkle into that scenario. Ferraiolo's work portrays the coming-of-age of a young man who must balance the responsibilities of school, social life, and fighting crime with his father-figure hero. Anderson's narrative follows a similar vein, but creates an absentee father-situation. Wallace's text is something different altogether: it skews for an older audience, and her protagonist is a post-teenage-years woman trying to survive in the city after distancing herself from her corrupt father. All three are notably and significantly different in their characterization of secondary characters than all previously studied sidekick examples. (Though not discussed here, there are a number of other recently-published "sidekick" works entering the market at any given time. A partial list of currently available texts are found in Appendix B.)

In particular, the meta-novel makes the sidekick question his or her role the entire time. We see an intimate look at their thoughts, which are often fixated on becoming heroes. The narrative drive of the meta-novel is to constantly make sidekicks think beyond their roles. There is no casual acceptance of their lots as sidekicks; there is no Watson-mentality of contentedness in remaining a sidekick forever. The larger point of these meta-novels is to challenge the status

quo, to question why sidekicks are kept at the side. In doing this, the entire narrative role of the sidekick is redefined: in fact, it could be said that they are not sidekicks at all at this point, but are effectively the protagonists, even if not in name. In the case of Anderson's novel, Andrew Bean is a sidekick in name only—his super refuses to mentor him. In Ferraiolo's novel, Scott Hutchinson is not a sidekick either: he's a gimmick and financial draw for an aging hero losing his grip on what is right and wrong. For Wallace, Bremy St. James auditions to just *become* a sidekick the entire novel. As these three sidekicks aren't sidekicks, and aren't necessarily treated as sidekicks throughout their novels, but are without a doubt the main focus of each respective text, the question becomes, "what are they?"

The answer is simple: they're something new.

When coupling this newness with typical YA themes, this question of identity is further complicated. Central questions like, "who am I?" and "who will I become?" are deepened when the apprenticeship itself is in question. If becoming a hero someday is suddenly not guaranteed, then what will become of him or her? I begin with Ferraiolo to set the stage for this illustration, as the world of *Sidekicks* is the most stereotypical of superhero texts. I next augment this with Wallace's text, as it brings new considerations to bear, but lacks the depth to stand on its own. As Anderson's text brings the most interesting twists on the dynamic, it will be studied last.

Scott Hutchinson

Ferraiolo's *Sidekicks* places the adolescent Scott Hutchinson, a.k.a. Bright Boy, alongside Trent Clancy, a.k.a. Phantom Justice, the hero of New York City. As a YA text, it makes perfect sense that Scott struggles to balance his work as a crime-fighter by night and life in school by day. The first chapter firmly places this text into YA territory: after saving an attractive female

by catching her as she fell off of a building, Bright Boy experiences an erection (something difficult to hide in his Robin-esque shorts). A helicopter news crew films the action, and later replays the footage repeatedly on public television. If the experience and the repeated news coverage weren't enough, Scott finds his sidekick identity lampooned throughout his school the next day. Socially, Scott barely fits in, having no friends and no social group to associate with. The life of a sidekick has consumed his attention. The fulfillment he found in being Bright Boy allowed him to readily accept his social marginalization when not in costume. Subsequent to his unfortunate news coverage, he finds himself alienated from the only part of his persona in which he found solace—sparking the obvious identity crisis that drives the novel. Scott's less-than-obvious identity crisis is how the novel works to redefine the sidekick role, and this second crisis and redefinition can be seen through a number of different combinations of elements within the text. There are three, however, that showcase his struggles best. The first is the nature of his relationship with his superhero, Phantom Justice. The second is how his new-found romance lets him challenge his constrictions as a sidekick. The third is how the first two issues combine in the face of challenges to his conviction to hero ideology.

To understand how Phantom Justice and Bright Boy interact, it is important to establish the parameters of their fictional world: here, heroes and villains are cataloged by the nature of their power(s). The three categories constituting one as “super” are plus strength, plus speed/reflexes, and plus intelligence (31). Both Bright Boy and Phantom Justice belong to the biological category of “plus strength/plus speed” or “plus/plus,” which is a somewhat common combination. Plus intelligence often appears as a super's only gifted trait, and the likelihood of a triple plus (plus strength, plus speed/reflexes, plus intelligence) is very low. In this world of

pluses, Trent's Phantom Justice embodies the Batman figure as much as Scott's Bright Boy embodies the Robin figure. He is a mysterious and rich crime-fighter who adopted an orphaned young boy. Their physically imposing butler/trainer/housekeeper Louis Sullivan is a modified placeholder for Alfred. All of this is obviously intentional, as any twist placed upon the superhero genre entails beginning with the familiar (on the idea of changing "superhero iconography," see Romagnoli and Pagnucci 81-87). In fact, the situation in which Scott finds himself (adolescence impeding his ability to wear a costume designed for a child) further mirrors the frustrations felt by Dick Grayson in comics chronicling Robin's decision to become Nightwing (Romagnoli and Pagnucci 46-47). Scott faces increasing hostility from Trent in regards to his request to wear a more appropriate costume (Ferraiolo 47), which eventually comes to a head almost violently (174). The hostility Trent directs toward Scott grows throughout, leading into the major twist in the book, as well as the major change to Scott's definition of sidekick: the revelation that Trent has long been orchestrating his hero-villain face-offs as a source of financial and popular success. This news comes in the form of a chapter told in the third-person, following Trent. This chapter tells of Trent's long-term financial agreement with his arch-nemesis Dr. Chaotic: they stage epic battles and both get paid for it by companies who gain product placement during the television coverage (115-17).

Additionally, it is later revealed that Trent has been killing other pluses when it was either opportunistic or necessary to keep his position as the sole hero of the city (212, 252-53). Once the reader knows of Trent's murderous actions to control the plus-population, everything understandably changes. His heroics, at least of late, are nothing of the sort. Scott, then, no longer has a true hero to be sidekick to. In addition, the details surrounding the death of Scott's

parents become suspect, leading one to speculate whether or not Trent arranged for their death. Scott's adoption and training, then, was a calculated step taken by Trent to increase Phantom Justice's popularity: a move that would garner more cash-flow from a younger demographic. As Scott begins to question Trent regarding a change in Bright Boy's costume, he is more of a liability than an asset in the eyes of his mentor and guardian. In fact, this liability issue has been brewing probably since Scott's adolescence. Trent states to Dr. Chaotic that he would love to "leave Bright Boy bleeding in an alley somewhere," using the death of his sidekick to "boost the ol' numbers" (117, 116). Ferraiolo has obvious knowledge of comic book history, here employing the sidekick as a "draw for younger readers" scheme (Wright 17; Romagnoli and Pagnucci 172). The killing of a sidekick to boost popularity/readership alludes to the death of Jason Todd, Dick Grayson's successor as Robin (Romagnoli and Pagnucci 47-48).

Scott eventually finds himself cast aside by Trent—who believes he killed his sidekick with a modified overdose of adrenaline (237). (Scott is saved by a group of supers operating as an underground resistance against Trent's growing megalomania.) Scott is now a sidekick without a hero, although it is likely his work and world as a sidekick were always shams. He was never truly a sidekick, in that the battles he and Trent fought were mostly all staged. Here, almost unavoidably, Scott assumes the responsibility of hero: he is asked to be the sole "good guy" challenging Trent without knowing all of the details, players, or even the final outcome. What makes Scott's situation even more unique is that the first villain he faces as a hero is his former mentor, the one who taught him how to be heroic. Such irony is typical of the new form of sidekick that Ferraiolo has crafted. Although Scott's heroics as Bright Boy have been fabricated as part of an ongoing get-rich-quick scheme, he has still been brought up believing the mantras

regarding protecting the innocent, bringing evil-doers to justice, etc. Without bringing him into the fold, Trent needed to maintain the appearance of an honest-to-goodness sidekick. In this manner, Trent trains the hero who ultimately helps foil his plans for on-going fame and glory. Scott has been a “non-sidekick” to a villain for years.

The revealing skin-tight costume that brings Scott into growing conflict with Trent brings us to the second way Ferraiolo redefines his sidekick: a new-found romance that challenges Scott’s contentedness as a sidekick. At its core, *Sidekicks* is a love story between Scott and Allison Mendes. The prospect of such a love seems impossible for two reasons: one, it begins when Scott is at his lowest emotional level seen in the story, and two, Allison is the secret identity for Dr. Chaotic’s sidekick, Monkeywrench. Scott and Allison have been (unknown) sworn enemies for years. Scott’s emotional low begins with the news-coverage of his erection. It mortifies him, and as his schoolmates actively make fun of Bright Boy, his entire outlook on his life seems dire:

Basically, I have no life (social or otherwise) as Scott, and now my hero identity is not comfortable anymore either. I mean, becoming Bright Boy has always been my escape. Have a bad day as Scott? No problem! Just slap on the uni, go out, bust some skulls, and become a hero to millions. But now, that’s completely changed. My stupid costume has made me [a] joke. And I feel stuck. (68)

Feeling stuck is new territory for Scott, as he has always had the outlet of experiencing fame and adoration as the successful Bright Boy. Now that Bright Boy is a laughing stock and because of the sexual nature of his humiliation it makes it even more complicated Scott has nowhere to go.

Coupling this inability to act and Scott's desire to disappear into the character of Bright Boy also brings to mind one of the more interesting avenues in novels of this type of YA text: the concept of hiding behind a mask, the dual identity. In both YA and in real life, the "masks" worn by young adults are often personas adapted and applied in different situations. This falls directly in line with what Brown and Levinson refer to as "face": "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [or herself]" (qtd. in Wardhaugh and Fuller 256). In this case, Scott has a desire for "positive face," which is, as Wardhaugh and Fuller explains, "the desire to act out the identity you are claiming for yourself on a particular occasion" (257). Because Scott cannot admit to being Bright Boy, and his peers have made that identity undesirable, he experiences a desire for "negative face," or the "desire to be unimpeded by others' actions" (Wardhaugh and Fuller 257). Scott technically still has negative face, at least in the sense that he can still do what he wants. His peer group would likely not allow him the use of either positive or negative face, as they would ridicule his desire to be Bright Boy as well as harass any attempt to save his negative face by acting outside of their influence. Considering that positive and negative face occur within the framework of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, true use of positive and/or negative face would require actual communication between Scott and his peers (Wardhaugh and Fuller 256). However, from his standpoint as both outside observer and direct recipient of their scorn, he nonetheless feels unable to act.

Finding himself with no foreseeable course of action makes perfect sense as a natural part within the maturation process. It is not until the return of Dr. Chaotic and Monkeywrench that Scott has a force acting upon him sufficient enough to "unstick" him, as it were. A number of years have passed since the last confrontation with Dr. Chaotic, and were it not for Trent's

sagging popularity, they may never have faced off again. Monkeywrench, always assumed by Scott to be a boy, now has a new costume that hides both face and any features that might now reveal her as a female. A few altercations occur in which Dr. Chaotic reveals his renewed antagonism toward Phantom Justice. More importantly, Monkeywrench heckles Bright Boy about his publicized erection. Things change during another run-in, when Bright Boy and Phantom Justice confront Dr. Chaotic and Monkeywrench inside a warehouse complex. Scott's focus is entirely on Monkeywrench:

The only things that exist in the world right now are Monkeywrench and my hatred for him . . . and he hasn't even noticed yet. He's watching the exchange between Chaotic and Phantom, because that's what we sidekicks usually do; we stand around and wait for the main event to start, and then we fight. I mean, that's why we're called sidekicks; if we were supposed to start the fighting, we'd probably be called *frontkicks* or something. (76)

Ferraiolo succinctly sums up the role typically played by comic book sidekicks: wait while the heroes talk to the villains, wait until the heroes or villains begin to fight, and so on. Regardless of his role as sidekick (and Ferraiolo's moment of metacognition), Scott loses his cool and rushes into a fight with Monkeywrench before his awaited cue (76). During the fight, they topple onto an adjacent building, crash through the roof, and land inside. The impact causes Monkeywrench's mask to come off. Scott, recognizing her, asks in disbelief, "Allison?" (80). Realizing her identity has been compromised, she frantically attacks him until she succeeds in taking his mask off as well.

As they face each other, in costume but mask-less for the first time, they reach an impasse: Allison calls it “mutually assured destruction” (83). If either were to say something about the other’s secret, then the other would reveal all the other’s secrets. Although this is a moment of sudden and unforeseen intimacy (for it is indeed an intimate moment, somewhat akin to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, “naked, and they felt no shame” [Genesis 2:25]), the full impact is somewhat lost—Allison does not even know his name. While Scott knows she sits in many of his classes throughout the school day, Allison barely knows him, and she thinks his name is Steve. The “Steve” mistake comes from her friend Olivia’s mistake earlier that day, when she asked if a despondent Scott was all right. Regardless of this mistake, Scott leaves the fight with a new wrinkle in his life: he has an unparalleled intimacy with a girl he considers to be one of the more attractive (and unattainable) in his grade.

The actual beginning of their romantic relationship ends up being easier on Scott’s part than he had imagined. After a day of ignoring him (and causing him some understandable confusion), Allison pulls Scott into a Janitor’s closet to talk him down from attempting something drastic to get her attention (104). During their conversation, Allison reveals that Dr. Chaotic is her father, as well as explaining her reluctance to call her and her father’s actions as “villainous.” Because they are still in school, Allison escorts Scott to their next class and promptly obtains an excuse for the two of them to leave for independent study (110). Scott and Allison talk about their respective lives as sidekicks, whether or not Allison considers her father a villain or merely a man guided by misunderstood principles, and how both Scott and Allison should adopt new costumes. Scott desires a costume that does not create moments of indecency, and Allison wants a costume that does not conceal her femininity. After the two of them dress in

new, edgier, and more comfortable outfits, they spar over a few buildings until they end up kissing on top of a truck. The “fight” and kissing are recorded and posted on the internet (158-59). Bright Boy and Monkeywrench are the talk of his school the next day (157).

In the span of one day, everything in Scott’s life changes: his arch-enemy is a girl who goes to his school, she takes an active interest in him, he finds a new costume that does not make him self-conscious, and he kisses said girl. As he walks through the halls of his school, listening to everyone talk about how exciting it is that Bright Boy and Monkeywrench are a couple, he thinks, “for the first time in years, I feel good about both of my selves. I feel like I have a secret worth having again, and oddly enough, it makes it easier to keep” (163). That the new acceptance of Scott’s other identity bolsters his self-worth falls directly in line with what Ingrid Schoon writes in regards to positive youth development. Within a greater context of chances and opportunities influencing youth development, Schoon recognizes the “long-standing question” inherent when studying “the individual and the context in which s/he is embedded” (163).

Schoon goes on to recapitulate previous arguments:

On the one hand, it is argued that social context and conditions shape individual attributes and characteristics . . . alternatively it has been argued that individuals enter environments selectively by choice or through constraints imposed by their psychological characteristics. (163)

Scott’s school is his social context, one he must enter without choice, and—until this moment—has had psychological constraints imposed upon him by the ridicule of the student-body. Furthermore, the social context introduced by Allison shapes his “individual attributes and characteristics” more than any other up to this point. The last, perhaps most important social

context for Scott is Trent, and the distance from Trent in which this all happens. The new costume was obtained with the knowledge that Trent would not approve. Scott's new relationship with Allison is also something entirely taboo under Trent's rule. Scott asserts his own opinions and desires for the first time when they would have real-world consequences. Allison's presence in Scott's life allows him to act in direct conflict with what his superhero would condone. In this way, Scott begins to shed his sidekick subservience. Additionally, and more to the point in this case, as Trent is not a true hero, Scott is actually beginning to move out of the oppressive and controlling nature of an untrustworthy and psychologically abusive guardian (although Scott does not know that yet).

As Scott begins to move away from that oppression, to make his own decisions regarding right and wrong, it seems that he might be the only character in the book who holds a consistent conviction for seeking justice: the third element for a sidekick redefinition. Trent's search for justice is obviously fake, or at best, long-ago corrupted. Dr. Chaotic's outward motivation is a warped sense of justice; according to Allison, Dr. Chaotic believes he works to right certain injustices ignored by the confines of the law (134). His outward motivation is also the financial arrangement with Trent. Allison however, after following her father's lead for a time, begins to show signs of true conviction, which complicates the matter of exactly who ends up playing hero/sidekick at the end of the novel. While Scott holds the only consistently apparent conviction for seeking justice, there are those, like Allison, who either develop a sense for correcting wrongs or unveil hidden motivations toward upholding righteousness. Others like this include Louis and Jake, the bully at Scott's school. For most of the text, Jake is known only as the bully "as dumb as a bag of hammers" who picks on Scott on a regular basis (34). After Trent shoots

Scott with the dart of adrenaline, it is Jake who saves him. Jake is a plus intelligence who has long been employed in keeping Scott safe by encouraging the separation between Scott and his persona as Bright Boy (242-46). Louis is another secret plus-intelligence, although it is unclear whether or not he is a plus speed/plus strength as well.

While Louis and Jake have worked for the greater good all along, Scott is the only one who acts out of repetition and habit—he does not know about the intrigue or deception going on below the surface. As such, his is a more pure form of “right”; for Scott, there are no gray areas, no compromises. This issue of determining right from wrong is hugely important in the world of heroes and sidekicks. In this case, it falls directly in line with Trent’s actions and Scott’s reactions. In *Morality and Self-Interest*, Paul Bloomberg offers two basic understandings of morality. The first deals with “how one ought to behave toward others” (3). As Bloomberg continues to define this type of interpersonal consideration, he places it alongside justice, that which is “understood loosely to encompass all fair dealings between people” (3). Morality and justice, according to Bloomberg, are “often seen to have the same scope,” bringing the understanding of one into alignment with an understanding of the other (3). While the essays in *Morality and Self-Interest* become increasingly nuanced in regards to justice and whether or not one has sufficient reason to be socially just (15-30), recognizing the fundamental connection between morality, justice, and how heroes/sidekicks must therefore act, makes perfect sense when thinking of Scott’s actions in the latter half of *Sidekicks*.

What makes Scott’s situation even more unique, and therefore worth more weight in the redefinition of sidekick, is the source of his commitment to justice: it was taught to him by the now-corrupted Trent. This is, again, the great irony in the text. The opportunistic and two-faced

Trent instilled in Scott an unwavering belief in fighting for good. As a six-year-old adopted out of an orphanage that was his home for two years, it makes perfect sense that Scott would believe the dogma of his mentor/father figure—even if his father figure didn't believe it himself anymore. Scott's childlike belief lets him act without hesitation when it comes to the final confrontation with Trent. In fact, Scott acts on those ideals in an act of faith when he confronts Trent at the end of the novel. His concern is for Allison's well-being (she was taken after Scott was given the adrenaline designed to kill him). In his search for her, Scott follows the direction of Jake, who speaks to him telepathically. Scott does not know about the various (and numerous) parts of the plan to discredit and defeat Trent: a fake body has been given to Trent without his knowledge and there is a hidden video camera broadcasting Trent's actions and confession. Additionally, and still unbeknownst to Scott, Louis and Allison are alive and well, and have been working with Jake (and others) to stop Trent for some time. Blind faith, then, is the closest approximation for what Scott exhibits as the love heroic tool of the coalition established to stop Trent's murders.

But could that lone hero have been someone else? Although *Sidekicks* is told from Scott's point of view, there arises another consideration: if Dr. Chaotic was working for the side of justice all along, that would mean Allison is another superhero sidekick. While Scott's unique situation is without question the call for a redefinition of his role as a sidekick, Allison's actions complicate things even further, as she essentially helps deputizes Scott to help defeat Trent. Could a case be made for making Allison the hero of Scott's sidekick-as-hero novel? In many ways, yes. Allison provides an even more intriguing test case than Scott. As a multi-faceted character partially obscured through the nature of the first-person narration, Allison's actions and

motivations are in question until the very end of the text. In terms of conflict, she shares, albeit partially, in Scott's major conflict: her parent. That Scott's final conflict is with his surrogate father is no accident (remembering from Chapter Two the importance of parental relationships in YA texts). In the same fashion, Allison has her own issues with her father. According to Allison, Dr. Chaotic (real name Dr. Edward Simmons) is actually a passably good father. Regardless of the fact that he had his underage child take part in the elaborate fakery of Trent's good vs. evil battles (somewhat akin to Batman's enlisting Carrie Kelly in *The Dark Knight Returns*), Allison makes note of the fact that even when he had been sent to prison, he always ensured their lines of communication remained open: "my dad never stopped talking to me . . . Even when he went away, we still talked" (181). This comes out only after his reaction to finding out she and Scott changed costumes and publicly kissed: he stops talking to her (181).

After all is said and done, it becomes clear that Allison was at least somewhat in the know when it came to Dr. Chaotic's plan(s) for defeating Trent: she allowed her father to create the synthetic copy of her skin to use in tricking Trent into thinking she was dead, she laid low and pretended to be dead while her father went to help Scott, and she waited in their old lab to help Scott finish Trent in front of the camera. Whether or not she knew that her father was going to sacrifice himself is unclear, although it is clear that he understood his actions would require his death to ensure her survival. Dr. Chaotic's sacrifice and Scott's willingness to confront Trent in an attempt to save Allison align with what Sachdeva et al. suggest in the article "The Role of Self-Sacrifice in Moral Dilemmas:" namely that "the choice that conflicts with selfishness can often be seen as morally right" (2). Although perceived as a villain, Dr. Chaotic exhibits morally justifiable behavior. Scott's morality is also intact, regardless of where he learned it. Although, to

be thorough, Bloomberg would likely discount Dr. Chaotic and Scott's actions as moral or just because they lack the impartiality necessary, as "agents must not see their own interests, of the interest of their families, communities, etc., as having any special standing whatsoever in the decision procedure that determines what ought to be done" (3). This disqualifies any motivation based on Allison, as Scott and Dr. Chaotic are obviously partial. However, because stopping Trent counts toward the greater good and safety of the citizens of New York, the claim for Scott's well-adjusted morality stands.

Even more to the point than the complicated parental relationship is Allison's hero/sidekick dynamic with Scott. During one of their dates, they hear a cry for help. Scott takes the lead in answering the call, but it is Allison who physically diffuses the situation. Afterward, she tells Scott of her remorse for not having helped more people in her past (222). Their work together is mutually deferential, and comes with an ease of two who have been connected for years. Considering their similarities in age and experience, the question whether or not one plays the hero while the other plays the sidekick is convoluted. The book ends with Allison and Scott, free of their obligations to sidekick for another, head out to answer a cry for help. Allison jokes about changing her name to "the Viper," while Scott could be "the Viper's assistant" (309). While this is said in jest, the fact that Allison also possesses plus intelligence puts her into a more intellectually advantageous position to assume the lead. Considering she was also the one making nearly all of their romantic decisions (meeting up, new costumes, when and how to kiss) also suggests her comfort in making command choices. Complicating this dynamic even further is the involvement of Jake and Louis, who have already shown their abilities in strategy and plan-execution—which Scott has followed in lieu of making his own plans. Scott ends the novel

by reaffirming his resolve to follow plans set out by Jake, Louis, and even Allison. While Scott's credibility does not hinge on his need to be the one making the decisions, he remains the "hero" of his self-told novel without becoming a "full-fledged hero," nor ever achieving a typical sidekick position.

Bremy St. James

The sidekick from Wallace's texts *Sidekick* and *Sidekick Returns* (perhaps a titling nod to the Tim Burton films *Batman* and *Batman Returns*) presents another scenario that fails to establish her in a typical sidekick role. In doing so, Wallace also creates a situation unique from what Scott experienced regarding a sidekick and his or her hero. Bremy St. James spends all of *Sidekick* "auditioning" to fill the unsolicited role of sidekick to hero Dark Ryder. Described as "Heroes meets Bridget Jones," *Sidekick* fits better into New Adult (NA) fiction than YA, considering Bremy St. James is a struggling college student. Michael Cart, in a short but well-researched piece of library-journalism, offers insight into the difference between genres. One of his interviewees, Editor Margo Lipschultz, characterizes NA as "a subgenre that bridged the gap between contemporary YA and contemporary romance" (qtd. in Cart, "YA or NA?" 11). This bridging of the gap includes "college-age and early twenties protagonists" as well as using "a younger, often first-person narrative voice" (11). Lipschultz also makes it a point to mention that these are very often romance novels, "published under our adult romance and fiction imprints Harlequin HQN and Harlequin MIRA and in our flagship digital imprint, Carina Press" (11). *Sidekick* unquestionably falls into this category. Furthermore, Cart makes it clear that NA "began and continues to be a vital presence in the e-world" ("YA or NA?" 10). John Green also adds to this in his op-ed, "Does YA Mean Anything Anymore? Genre in a Digitized World," citing the

growth of on-line publishing as it increasingly shifts attention away from traditional publication practices. While Green's fears that publishing will split into two distinct directions (the focus of print publication on stories that "might make a lot of money," and how everything else "will live on Amazon"), he recognizes that "every now and again, a book will rise up out of the sea of the Kindle store and become so *50 Shades of Grey*—popular that it will transition the author from online distribution to physical distribution" (23). *Sidekick* is one of these Harlequin-romance ebooks, geared to a YA/NA audience. (Wallace's third text is geared for paperback publication by St. Martin's; it seems possible future works will similarly "rise up out of the sea.")

Although *Sidekick* is definitely NA material, it becomes clear that because Bremy has chosen a clean-break independence from her billionaire father, she faces the first significant maturation process in her life. In this way, Bremy shares many emotional trials facing today's YA audiences: parental separation, mistrust in adult authority, and a struggle to position herself among her new peer group. Coupled with this comes the elements connected to the sidekick meta-novel. In this case, Bremy is neither superpowered, nor mentored in the ways of caped heroes. This would typically place her in a Batman-type scenario, where her immense wealth would fund all sorts of education, technology, and influence to help her establish herself as a crime-fighter (Romagnoli and Pagnucci 172). Unfortunately, the break from her father (which provides both the underlying angst she feels as well as the veiled villain for the series) leaves her with no finances to speak of—she accepts a job as an errand-runner for a strip club to pay off her Russian-mob landlord (Wallace loc. 108)

After a number of run-ins with a gang on a crime spree convinces Bremy she needs to become Dark Ryder's sidekick, she eventually persuades the hero to give her a chance (Wallace

loc. 1186). The drive for Bremy to join Ryder comes from her search for self-worth, coupled with her new-found independence. She reflects on her confrontations with the criminals, stating she “had never felt so alive” (loc. 1012). In addition, by engaging against criminals and seeing Ryder in action up close, she enters “a world I had never known. A world where decisions weren’t always being made for me in advance. A world where my father’s expectations didn’t matter” (Wallace loc. 1013). The problem for both of them is that Bremy is nearly entirely devoid of any kind of skill set. While this is meant to create a relate-able, humorous protagonist, it more effectively creates a scenario where Bremy has nothing other than anger toward her father to get her through. In terms of any deeper characterization, there is none. What the book *does* offer, however, is this interesting “sidekick audition” scenario.

Another recent work, *Sidekicks* by Dan Santat, tells the story of another kind of sidekick-audition process. In this case, four highly intelligent animal sidekicks vie against one another to become their owner’s new sidekick. A graphic novel, Santat’s *Sidekicks* offers a story based on love and family, as the super-powered animals gather closer to their owner out of love. The hero of the story, Captain Amazing, holds a sidekick audition where over five thousand people show up. His response is, “I was hoping to hang out with the boys today,” the boys being his dog Roscoe, his hamster Fluffy, and his chameleon Shifty (Santat 147). His cat, Manny, was his previous sidekick until there was a falling out (140). The whole text hinges on Amazing’s relationship with his pets (all of whom have some sort of power, except Shifty), and the connections they have as they choose to spend more time together and grow closer.

Wallace’s text, on the one hand, almost performs the opposite function: distancing one’s self from a mentor to achieve confidence and agency in one’s own fate. By trying to become a

sidekick, Bremy seeks to yoke herself to the authority offered by Dark Ryder. While this might put Bremy in a category of “pre-sidekick” tales, even that definition falls apart when she fails the test Ryder gives her (Wallace loc. 2115). On the other hand, when Ryder becomes incapacitated, Bremy is the only person remotely available to help thwart the plot against the city (Wallace loc. 2628). Although Bremy is brought into the fold, she does not act as Ryder’s official sidekick in any capacity. Instead, she acts as the last-choice hero in absence of the more experienced Ryder. In terms of what defines a typical, respected superhero, Bremy does not qualify. She receives a crash-course in crime fighting from Ryder’s Alfred-esque guardian, and a new costume from her next-door neighbor, but the improvements end there. The final confrontation with her father and the hired crime-gang serves as the end to an on-going misadventure. Bremy is neither would-be sidekick, sidekick, nor proper hero.

This continues to be Bremy’s state of affairs into *Sidekick Returns*, as Ryder hasn’t made contact since the concluding events of book one, and Bremy tries to hone her skills as The Sidekick on her own. Like Scott in *Sidekicks*, Bremy is left desiring more out of her position as would-be sidekick: her situation hasn’t changed very much over the course of her auditioning to be a sidekick. This goes beyond questioning whether or not her story arc is static or round, as her character undergoes the requisite maturation and revelation in terms of her relationships with her father, sister, and neighbors. What does happen is a return to the original state of affairs: she desires to be a sidekick without a clear path to take in order to achieve that desire.

Andrew Macon Bean

John David Anderson’s *Sidekicked* deals heavily with a desire to become a sidekick, but takes that premise in a completely different direction than Wallace and *Sidekick*. Anderson’s text

is based on a premise very similar to Ferraiolo's, and it could have been analyzed alongside Ferraiolo in this chapter, as both establish the situation of a sidekick/protagonist in a world of superheroes. There are, however, at least two significant differences between the two texts. The first is that teenaged *Sidekicked* protagonist, Andrew Bean, does not get the girl in the end despite a good deal of romantic tension between him and his fellow sidekick, Jenna. The second is Andrew's superhero/father figure is not a hyper-vigilant do-gooder (or even a former do-gooder turned villain)—he is, in fact, a drunken recluse. Considering the weight these facts have on the redefinition of Andrew as a sidekick, *Sidekicked* provides the most insightful material in deciding just how far YA has taken sidekicks from their original inception.

Andrew's environment is a fictional city called Justica, where the superheroes are born with their powers: this is attributed to unexplained genetic differences. Due to the fact that his senses are heightened far beyond those of a normal human, thirteen year-old Andrew calls himself the Sensationalist. One thing setting *Sidekicked* apart from other meta-novels is Andrew's involvement with a secret sidekick training program code-named Highview Environmental Revitalization Organization (or H.E.R.O.), which allows Andrew and five other specially gifted middle school students to hone their abilities and train with their assigned superheroes (30). Andrew and his fellow sidekicks-in-training treat H.E.R.O. like an elective extra-curricular activity, which is, in fact, its cover at Highview Middle School. The concept of a sidekick training program is not unique to *Sidekicked*, as it has been used in a number of novels, comics, and films over the years. Notable examples include virtually any incarnation of Marvel's X-Men (particularly when focusing on Xavier's "School for Gifted Youngsters"), Disney Channel's *Sky High* (2005), Revolution Studio's *Zoom* (2006), and DC's "Teen Titans." What

sets H.E.R.O., and more specifically Andrew, apart from these is the setting of his status as a hero-less sidekick. The hero assigned to mentor him is the Titan, described during his hey-day as “Nearly indestructible. Fists of iron. Nerves of steel. Heart of Gold” (68). The current-day Titan, however, tells Andrew “You do not want to be my sidekick . . . I am sorry. I just can’t right now” essentially leaving him in sidekick limbo (78). Andrew’s hero will not mentor him, and as he’s been told to be patient, he will not likely be assigned a new hero any time soon (52).

Andrew’s situation shifts the status quo by creating a character who, according to the “Superhero Sidekick Code of Conduct” must act with conviction toward his sworn allegiance to the Titan, but that same conviction forces him to respect the Titan’s request that he keep his distance (41). As a consequence, Andrew essentially functions on his own. (Anderson himself acknowledges this fact, calling Andrew a “sort of a sidekick” because “to be a sidekick you have to have someone to stand beside and . . . you know . . . kick with” [“Teacher’s Guide” 1].) Furthermore, the absence of a guiding force from a recognized super is the basis of nearly every form of conflict in the book. The Titan was once the most celebrated and powerful superhero the city (and probably the world) had known, but now has dropped off of the grid, becoming a drunken recluse. All roads lead to forcing the Titan to reappear and assert himself once more. It also sets up the scenario where Andrew constantly questions his self-worth regarding the absentee-father figure in his life. (It needs to be emphasized that Andrew’s home life is very stable. His mother and father live together with no sign of marital discord, and their concern for him is illustrated repeatedly. However, he keeps his identity as the Sensationalist a secret from them. Considering the nature of the text, his parents function in a very limited capacity beyond allowing Andrew to pursue his interest in H.E.R.O.)

The absentee father figure makes Andrew eventually take a stand on his own—he chooses to stand and fight regardless of, or in place of, the refusing Titan. Andrew has three conversations with the Titan over the course of the book; four if you count one given in flashback. The most important is the third conversation—the one that occurs when Andrew is summoned to the Titan’s hideout to learn the truth about why the Titan turned his back on crime-fighting. Andrew hears the story of the Titan’s decision from another reclusive and semi-retired hero, Jim Rediford. After hearing how the Titan is wracked with guilt over the death of a villain at his hands, Andrew enters the other room to speak with the Titan:

I know what happened. It’s the same with me sometimes. I see things. And hear things. From miles away. I know they’re coming, and it pisses me off because I know I can’t do anything about them. You can’t save everybody, as much as you’d like to. It’s just not possible. I know that. But that does not mean you stop trying. The city is in danger. You’re in danger. The Code says I am supposed to stand beside you. To follow you. But I can’t stand by you if you will not get up.
(292-93)

This speech is interspersed with a good deal of description and introspection on Andrew’s part, who all the while tries to spark some reaction into the hero who should have been mentoring him all along. Nothing happens—“The Titan does not move” (293).

An interesting insight into both Andrew and the Titan at this point comes from Bree Picower’s article “Tools of Inaction: The Impasse Between Teaching Social Issues and Creating Social Change.” While Picower explains the tools of inaction as they apply to social justice educators and the disconnect between teaching social justice and acting upon those teachings, the

tools of inaction can help explain why the Titan does not respond to Andrew. This, in turn, gives insight into Andrew's renewed commitment to action. Two tools of inaction mentioned by Picower are at play here. The first is the "tool of postponement," which suggests that the person in question would need "[his or her] temporary circumstances changed" so that he or she "would be better able to take action" (914). Another way to explain this tool of inaction is to state, "I'll do something when it affects me" (Picower 915). For the Titan, the circumstances that would need changing are his guilt/depression, his misunderstanding of what happened in the past (as he was not entirely culpable), and his physical deterioration due to inaction and alcohol consumption. He also does not act until he can no longer avoid it: he does something when it affects him. Andrew does not have this choice. He is neck-deep in the whole scheme from the beginning. The second tool working here is a tool of dismissal, the tool of "I can't make a difference" (Picower 918). This tool, according to Picower, comes from a sense of "powerlessness," allowing the Titan to "dismiss participating in something that [he] thought was hopeless" (918). The hopelessness for the Titan is not so much that justice will not be achieved, but that it would be hopeless for him to try to help achieve it. Because the Fox seems to have all things under control, any act on his part would feel "as pointless as spitting in the wind" (Picower 918). Andrew, on the other hand, feels powerless—literally—every day of his life. However, he does not let this lead him into inaction, but the opposite.

The speech Andrew gives marks a turning point. In more than one way, this acts as Andrew's last effort as a sidekick. Up until this point, Andrew has tirelessly held faith in the Titan. While the public questioned his whereabouts, and other supers begrudgingly accepted the Titan's slide into obscurity, Andrew never lost faith that his mentor might snap out of it and

becomes the behemoth of justice he once was. . . until now. After giving his speech, and seeing the Titan's non-reaction to it, Andrew wants to "scream at him," to "kick him off the bed," to "force him . . . to apologize" (293-94). He does not, citing the reason that "I just can't make myself believe anymore" (294). The Titan's choice to sit and not react to Andrew's speech is the final rejection. From this moment on, Andrew is on his own. The climax of the novel comes shortly thereafter, as does the plot twist revealing Jenna's involvement in the villain's actions. (Jenna's assigned hero, The Fox, turns out to be the returned daughter of a former nemesis of the Titan's—she is out for revenge.) Before finding this out, Andrew embarks on his own attempt to save those in harm's way—aided in part by his desire to find and save Jenna. Anderson layers rejection upon rejection onto Andrew: the Titan's repeated rejections; the pseudo-rejection of Jenna (although it seems as though she would have chosen Andrew had she not ended up in prison); the difficulty in having a largely intellectually-useful power instead of something physically intimidating. These difficulties, these rejections, are what stand between Andrew and whether or not he is a traditionally defined sidekick.

The basis of Andrew's impassioned speech to the Titan no doubt finds its germination in a conversation he has with Jenna. This conversation is arguably the most important piece of the novel. It also becomes the most intriguing from a romantic point of view as it ends with Jenna's kissing Andrew. Andrew's relationship with Jenna further aligns the text with a YA audience: he finds himself in a love triangle. Andrew works to determine whether or not Jenna likes him or newcomer Gavin. Gavin, a sidekick with powers almost entirely different from Andrew's (his skin can become almost impenetrable, making him something akin to X-Men's Colossus, or even the Hulk), almost instantly complicates the long-held affection Andrew has had for Jenna. The

love triangle continues to marginalize Andrew, already something of the outsider in H.E.R.O. due to the nature of his powers; instead of Jenna's agility and strength or Mike's power to shoot electricity from his hands, Andrew can sense "Sodium chloride. . . one crystal dissolved in about two ounces of water" (139). The triangle plays out over the course of the novel, including Jenna's inviting both Gavin and Andrew on a date (at the same time), kissing both of them (at different times), and admitting her confusion over whom she likes.

That Jenna takes liberties with Andrew and Gavin's feelings regarding any potential relationship has a significant impact on Andrew's embodiment of a sidekick, as it fundamentally changes how he sees himself: Andrew begins the novel as a never-been-kissed seventh grader who harbors romantic feelings for his closest female friend. As the novel progresses, Andrew must grapple with Jenna's interest in him, including her kissing him (180), which is entirely new territory. In terms of his development as a young man, this is part and parcel of the maturation process—or at least is not uncommon. The affect it has on his shifting personal awareness is significant, however, but not in the same sense as Scott's relationship with Allison in *Sidekicks*. For Andrew, the new connection with Jenna is always complicated, fragmented, and confusing. What it does grant him, aside from classic middle school angst, is an opportunity to face evil doers in the heat of battle. During the date to which Jenna invites both Andrew and Gavin (a fund-raising event including all of the city's wealthy patrons), the villains of the book attack and force the three sidekicks to engage. Andrew finds himself protecting the city's mayor as he tries to get him out of the building—an act that proves his worth in many regards, but one he is given to accomplish by Jenna. Andrew's powers keep him alive, but do not help in thwarting the enemy. Jenna's invitation brings Andrew into an unforeseen and unsanctioned moment of

heroism, but keeps him within the realm of sidekickery: Jenna and Gavin call the shots until the Fox arrives. Furthermore, Andrew goes unrecognized as a super-powered entity by the police officers who show up. After successfully getting the mayor out of harm's way, Andrew tries to re-enter the fray. However, as he's not wearing a mask, he is "just Andrew," and is evacuated along with everyone else (243). When the mayor gives a statement on the news that night, Andrew waits for him to "say something, to call us out" (251). All the mayor says, however, is a thank you to the Fox and "all the other nameless heroes who helped to stop this vicious attack" (251). Andrew feels this is enough, because "even being a nameless hero is still better than being no hero at all" (251). While being a nameless hero allows Andrew to feel some long-overdue pride in his abilities, making him feel like he "finally [has] a secret that's worth keeping," his actions were not necessarily those of a *superhero* (254). In this way then, as a sidekick facing evil without a hero, mask, costume, or utility belt to aid him, Andrew broadens the scope of who might qualify as a sidekick, or in what circumstances a sidekick might emerge. To further strip him of any kind of sidekick-moniker, H.E.R.O. is suspended after the attack (258). Andrew is now not even a sidekick in training to an absent hero: he's just a gifted ordinary citizen.

Recognizing Andrew's inherent identity as an ordinary citizen leads back into the all-important conversation he has with Jenna. In terms of the sidekick status quo, in fact, Jenna requires her own consideration. As they sit outside of the school, she turns to him and asks, "Do you think I am good? A good person, I mean?" (171). What follows is perhaps the longest conversational back and forth in the book. Jenna presses Andrew's answers, making him question exactly what he believes "being good" really means. Even his general answer does not satisfy her: "You do the right thing most of the time, and you make some mistakes, but you learn

from them, and you try to help other people or at least stay out of their way, and you do not kill anybody and you're, you know, basically good" (173). Andrew's answer is a fairly accurate representation of what doing-one's-best might look like for a sidekick in training. Jenna, however, finally gets to the crux of her musings: "Sometimes I do not think there really is a good and bad . . . At least, not the way we are always taught. Sometimes I think there are just choices and consequences" (175). She follows this with an increasingly complex yet familiar moral dilemma of whether the ends justify the means. The answer Andrew finally comes up with is rooted in increasing confusion and his attempt to "figure out why she is asking me all of this" (179). He tells her, "I do not *know*, Jenna. It's neither [good nor bad]. . . you did what you thought was right" (179). For Andrew, this makes the most sense in a convoluted situation. In light of what he knows as a conscientious human being, as well as a sidekick trying to live up to the Superhero Sidekick Code of Conduct, doing what seems right at the time is enough for Andrew. For Jenna, and for readers looking at the conversation retrospectively, she is trying to bring the disparate elements of the Fox's plan together: is Jenna doing good by aiding the Fox in killing the Titan so she can become the greatest hero the city has ever known—and do unquestionable good in the future? Their conversation carries the heaviest real-world implications for the reader. So much so that Anderson suggests teachers ask guided questions concerning "the difference between good and evil, right and wrong" (Anderson, "Teacher's Guide" 3).

Furthermore, the back and forth between Andrew and Jenna mirrors David Schmdtz's explanation of typical arguments involving morality. Schmdtz states, "even so, when people argue about whether something like affirmative action is right, they have a shared understanding

that it *matters* whether affirmative action is right” (81-82). While it does not matter exactly what two or more people might be arguing, the point Schmitz makes is that they have a vested interest and deeply seated belief that the argument matters. Part of Schmitz’s writing is intended to off a counter-argument to previously published writings on morality, namely whether or not acting on moral grounds requires a “special kind of reason” (81). Schmitz’s answer suggests that morality does *not* need to prove any kind of special reason before one takes action. Even without proof of these special reasons, Schmitz states that, “we have [a] basis for saying we *ought* to conform to commonsense morality,” which coincides directly with his choice of title: “Because It’s Right” (82, 79). In the case of *Sidekicked*, Jenna obviously cares about the outcome of their conversation—she is the discussion’s instigator, and she has the most to lose depending on the outcome. Andrew cares about the topic as well, though his has no active application.

While Andrew, who does not actively serve as a sidekick, has easy answers, Jenna has come to believe that “there’s an awful lot of gray in the world” (368). Because the Fox is a villain-turned-hero intent on retribution before turning fully altruistic, Jenna is more a tool to be used than a sidekick to be trusted. Unlike Trent with Scott, the Fox has chosen to incorporate Jenna into her plans for manipulating the public’s view of who is heroic and who is not. When the final confrontation occurs, however, Jenna chooses Andrew over the Fox—largely in part because of their previous conversation and history. When thinking of Jenna in terms of the whole narrative, she does not quite fit the sidekick mold either. In fact, if limited only to the book’s own Superhero Sidekick Code of Conduct, she fails all four at some point or another, and fails several of them a number of times. Jenna could similarly be considered a criminal accomplice, a double-agent, or a “confused, powerful, and impressionable” thirteen-year-old (369). The

Superhero Sidekick Code of Conduct establishes a common morality for all the students in H.E.R.O., as well as the heroes they are attached to. The Code of Conduct creates a morality that is bigger than any single character in the novel.

That Jenna creates a sidekick-definition problem as complicated as the one presented by Andrew plays into another reoccurring theme Anderson uses throughout the novel: that it's not about Andrew. While this might make the paradoxical meta-novel even more of a paradox, the phrase "it's not about you" is spoken to Andrew no fewer than four times (or five, if you count Andrew's personal question, "Is it me?" when the Titan refuses to mentor him; that the Titan squeezes his shoulder in comfort suggests that no, it is not him, puts this in line with the other four [78]). The first two are by Mr. Masters, the teacher in charge of H.E.R.O. He says it to Andrew as a way to explain the Titan's apparent disinterest in mentoring him (51). Jenna says it to Andrew when he questions her about why she was asking him all about good and evil (174). Finally, one of the villain's henchmen, the Jack of Clubs, says it right before he attempts to kill Andrew (197). After the Jack of Clubs says "I am sorry, kid, really. This is not about you," Andrew thinks, "Why does everybody keep *saying* that?" (197). The moment of cognition pays off beyond the obvious comedic effect. Andrew recognizes there are forces acting that he cannot see; part of the mystery of the novel comes from his unveiling who is behind the criminal activity. The connection Andrew has with the Titan, weak though it may be, is what continually brings Andrew into harm's way: the Fox wants to flush the Titan out of hiding. On the surface, it is all about the Titan. From this standpoint, Andrew is nothing more than a bystander in his own novel. In fact, although he is present at the final showdown, it is Jenna who disposes of the Fox and saves Andrew and the Titan. Jenna points out that when it comes to their education as

sidekicks, they are at the guidance of a single individual. She states, “Just like Mr. Masters was using you . . . shaping us all into what *he* thought the world needed in order to save it. That’s the way it works, Drew” (369). Furthermore, even the title, *Sidekicked*, suggests the present-tense action of kicking someone to the side—which is what seems to be happening to Andrew over the course of his own tale.

Although Andrew is something of a bystander in the wrong place at the wrong time throughout his own story, the way it resolves offers something more than Ferraiolo and Wallace’s texts: Andrew gladly embraces a future as a non-sidekick (at least for the time being). The Titan sees Andrew at the bowling alley again, this time to tell him he is officially retiring. He offers Andrew the chance to be his sidekick for one night, to “probably find some robbers to rough up, rescue some old ladies. Maybe try to dig up some drug dealers or something” (372). Andrew lets him off of the hook, citing that he “Didn’t bring my mask” (373). As Andrew watched the Titan walk away, he muses about how he might be “paired up with” a new hero someday, but “for now, I really do not care . . . my friends are waiting for me inside. And I am feeling normal for a change” (373). In many ways, this is what Andrew has asked for all throughout the book. Jenna asks him if he wants to be normal, and he responds with “[e]very day” (180). A conversation he has with fellow H.E.R.O. student Nikki shows him lamenting about his frustrating state of affairs regarding the nature of his powers and the Titan’s ongoing state of ignoring him (135-37). Nikki calls it “being tacked on” (136). When Andrew visits Jenna in prison, she asks him again if he’s “ever wanted to be normal,” to which he gives “pretty much the same answer. ‘Yeah. Sometimes. Maybe’” (369). Although he ends the tale as a sidekick-in-training without a hero, his world is complete, and he is content. To be a sidekick, by definition,

is to have someone to be a sidekick to. Andrew, by the end of the novel, is not a sidekick, and that's okay.

These three meta-novels also share something rather important: the sidekicks have an ultimately untrustworthy hero. Looking back once more at Watson and Holmes, it is striking that Watson, as sidekick, also told and narrated their adventures. Watson never doubted Holmes, and never needed to (although this sometimes gets complicated), and therefore never needed to assume the role of master detective in his stead. Watson writes the Sherlock Holmes stories (or Conan Doyle writes them from Watson's point of view, whichever you prefer), but never shows signs of ambition beyond his role. Scott, Bremy, and Andrew, however, change that established role by actively desiring movement into the hero role as they narrate their own novels. And all three do so by engaging with and adapting YA conventions. By the end of *Sidekicks*, Scott does not need to be the hero deciding what to do or who to save. Scott remains the hero of his self-told novel without becoming a "full-fledged hero," nor ever achieving a typical sidekick position. Likewise, Bremy ends the way the story began: with a strong desire to become a typical sidekick, but without a clear course of action to take to achieve that desire. Andrew is something different altogether: the youngest of all three characters studied, his "sidekick separation" at the end of his novel is the most complete. Instead of going forth with the intention to become a hero (or sidekick, in Bremy's case), Andrew achieves a state of contentedness outside of his sidekick/non-sidekick identity.

The Conclusion of this dissertation offers a few future avenues of study that will either further support the ways sidekicks emerge out of their relationships with their heroes, or will otherwise explore the nature of "sidekick separation."

CONCLUSION

Studying sidekicks fills a significant hole within the discipline of literary studies, as very few (if any) studies have devoted full attention to this type of character. Most studies that do mention sidekicks use them in a cursory or passing consideration. Now that this dissertation has established a foundation for studying sidekicks, other scholars can build upon and derive deeper insights regarding sidekicks within each scholar's respective field of specialization. Although this dissertation was somewhat structuralist in nature, there are many additional ways sidekicks can and should be studied within literary disciplines.

In fact, recognizing how YA and sidekicks resonate with readers (looking no further than the huge expectations and subsequent popularity of so many film adaptations of texts mentioned in this dissertation), literary departments have a tremendous opportunity to reach out to students by promoting the study of sidekicks, YA, and how YA uses sidekicks. As struggling English departments wrestle with declining student interest and retention, aggressively pursuing new students has become a major concern. In their case for why comic books should be granted full acceptance by the academy, Pagnucci and Romagnoli also address how "humanities are hurting . . . [as] the number of English majors has declined" (11). Their assertion is that "comic books have the power to draw students to the study of the humanities" (11). In a connected and even more potent vein, studying sidekicks in YA has the power to bring students to the humanities in droves. For just one example, Sierra Millman passes along the testimony of an associate professor at Lawrence University who believed he could "probably enroll more than 100 students" in his *Harry Potter*-themed course (par. 3). YA readers can connect and identify with characters in important and real ways. If students are finding it difficult to understand what,

exactly, “literature” does, using the connections they have formed with YA characters such as sidekicks is a perfect threshold through which to guide them into such a conversation.

Suggestions for Further Study

When I began my study of sidekicks, I only partially understood how fruitful this byway of literary study could be. I list here some of the many other topics about sidekicks that I entertained, but was not able to address in the dissertation as eventually constructed.

Antagonist < > Sidekick

Sometimes the sidekick falls into the antagonist role, or vice versa: the antagonist who becomes a sidekick. *The Lord of the Rings* brings Gollum into the Frodo/Sam pairing, and gives Frodo an untrustworthy, antagonistic second sidekick. On a lesser scale, Harry Potter’s relationship with Ron often strains to the point of argument and resentment. *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows* even has Ron angrily leave Harry’s side for a considerable amount of time. The antagonistic sidekick would be an intriguing topic for a YA study, as a large part of adolescence involves dealing with conflict from friends and relatives.

Sidekick Pantheon

There are often pantheons of sidekicks in a given fictive “universe.” For example, the cinematic *Star Wars* universe presents any number of hero/sidekick pairings: Han Solo and Chewbacca, C-3PO and R2-D2, jedis and padawans, sith lords and apprentices, and even the ewoks from *Return of the Jedi*. The more recent incarnations of *Star Wars* films, TV, comics, novels (including those for the YA and children audiences) and video games following *Return of the Jedi*’s cinematic release, are arguably geared toward a younger audience. The television show *Star Wars: The Clone War* would be particularly conducive to this kind of study: it is a

YA animated series that develops the relationship between Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker and his Padawan Ahsoka Tano over the course of six seasons.

Animal Sidekicks/Post-Humanism

There are a great number of these in YA. Sometimes they are normal animals, as in books like Beverly Cleary's *Henry and Ribsy*, the boy-and-his-dog companion storyline in the Ramona Quimby universe. Looking again to fantasy and mystery, worlds less constricted by "natural" laws of nature and physics, the animal sidekick becomes something else entirely. Returning to the example of Jennifer Strange in *The Last Dragonslayer*, the Quarkbeast is a better sidekick to Jennifer than Tiger in many ways—he accompanies her on more errands, he has a pre-existing relationship with her at the book's outset, and he is an imposing physical presence. Because of the Quarkbeast's somewhat limited intelligence, I use him as a foundational example; other animal sidekicks range from the unintelligent (and non-verbal) to highly intelligent.

Philip Pullman's fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* has a unique version of the animal sidekick. Pullman pairs female hero Lyra with her animal sidekick Pantalaimon (a male). Pantalaimon is highly intelligent and acts as Lyra's conscience in many regards: Jiminy Cricket to Lyra's Pinocchio. What makes Pantalaimon remarkable is his function as half of Lyra's soul. Throughout his trilogy, Pullman equips all of his human characters with an opposite-sex animal counterpart, called a *dæmon*—an external, tangible manifestation of one's soul.

A third variation of the animal sidekick is Gurgi's devotion to his hero Taran in Lloyd Alexander's high fantasy pentalogy, *The Chronicles of Prydain*. Alexander describes Gurgi as something between an animal and a man—someone who does not quite fit with either world, and who has consequently been shunned by both. I look to Gurgi, therefore, as one who exists as

both a human companion and an animal sidekick. I suggest one of the more emotionally fulfilling elements of Alexander's series is watching the devotion grow between these two characters, who are ultimately destined to be separated.

Similar to Gurgi in *Prydain* are Grover and Tyson in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*. As a satyr, Grover gives Percy a male sidekick that is part-animal. Characters like Gurgi and Grover bring to mind questions asking what it means to be human. Gurgi has been shunned by both "natural" humans and beasts, and therefore is something entirely unique, even though he performs as though he were a human (and yes, "performs" brings with it several further avenues of investigative potential). As a satyr, Grover has a nearly physical connection to the earth. This opens the door to eco-criticism and other ecological concerns.

The Literary Morphology of Sidekicks?

Harkening back to the Introduction, it would be fascinating to perform a much more detailed and complete study of gross constituent units of sidekicks, in the tradition of Levi-Strauss and structuralism. This kind of study would delve much more deeply into the theories behind structuralism. However, as is the case with many structuralist studies, an opportunity to then challenge or deconstruct that study would prove insightful as part of an on-going semiotic-conversation regarding sidekicks.

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Appendix A

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire Transcriptions

Library Scene (ref. here):

NEVILLE: “You know, i-, if you’re interested in plants, you’d be better with Gorshok’s *Guide to Herbology*. Do you know there’s a wizard i-, in Nepal who’s growing gravity-resistant trees?”

HARRY: “Neville, no offense, but I really do not care about plants. Now, if there’s a Tibetan turnip that will allow me to breathe underwater for an hour, then great. But otherwise . . .”

NEVILLE: “I do not know about a turnip, but you can always use gillyweed.”

Beach/Dock Scene (ref. here):

HARRY: “You’re sure about this Neville?”

NEVILLE: “Absolutely.”

HARRY: “For an hour?”

NEVILLE: “Most likely.”

HARRY: “Most likely?”

NEVILLE: “Well, there is some debate among herbologists as to the effects of fresh water versus salt water, but . . .”

HARRY: “You’re telling me this *now*? You must be joking!”

NEVILLE: “I just . . . wanted . . . to help.”

HARRY: “Well, it makes you a sight better than Ron or Hermione. Where are they?”

NEVILLE: “You seem a little tense, Harry.”

HARRY: “Do I?”

Appendix B

Partial List of Sidekick-Themed Texts

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