



Reading J.K. Rowling

Manon Cartier

► To cite this version:

Manon Cartier. Reading J.K. Rowling: Neomedievalism, children's fiction and dual address. Education. 2020. hal-02962382

HAL Id: hal-02962382

<https://univ-fcomte.hal.science/hal-02962382>

Submitted on 9 Oct 2020

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Mémoire

Présenté pour l'obtention du Grade de

MASTER

« Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation »

Mention 2nd degré, Professeur des Lycées et Collèges,

**READING J.K. ROWLING: NEOMEDIEVALISM,
CHILDREN'S FICTION AND DUAL ADDRESS**

Présenté par
CARTIER Manon

Sous la direction de :

GILLESPIE Margaret

Enseignante-chercheuse à l'Université de Bourgogne-Franche Comté

Année universitaire 2019-2020

SOMMAIRE

THANKS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1. NEOMEDIEVALISM: TRADITIONAL OR MODERN?	9
<i>a. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF NEOMEDIEVALISM</i>	9
<i>b. POSTMODERNISM AND NEOMEDIEVALISM</i>	14
<i>c. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MYTH</i>	17
<i>d. NEOMEDIEVALIST BESTIARIES AND ICONOGRAPHY</i>	21
2. CHILDREN'S FICTION: A LEGITIMATE GENRE	31
<i>a. A TIMELINE OF CHILDREN'S FICTION</i>	31
<i>b. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN'S FICTION</i>	34
3. CHILDREN'S FICTION: PARENTS AS A TARGET	42
<i>a. THE HARRY POTTER SAGA: CHILDREN'S, YOUNG ADULT OR ADULT FICTION?</i>	42
<i>b. CHILDREN'S FICTION AND NEOMEDIEVALISM: SHARED MOTIFS</i>	46
<i>c. DUAL ADDRESS: A DEFINITION</i>	49
CONCLUSION	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54
SEQUENCE DIDACTIQUE	57

THANKS

This paper represents two years of work, research and redaction. It would never have been possible if I had not been supported by my research director, Margaret Gillespie. So I would like to thank her first for her patience and support, and for all the advice she gave me. She has been benevolent all through the process of research and writing of this paper, always looking for information and references to help me. I could not thank her enough for this.

I also wish to thank all the teachers at the INSPE of Besançon, and also all the teachers at UBFC for their help: every question I asked was answered, and their knowledge has helped a thousand times to build this work.

Thanks also to my colleagues at Xavier Marmier High School in Pontarlier, especially my internship tutor Barbara Brugevin, who supported and helped me all along this year to build my didactic knowledge, and to create the last part of this research paper. My colleagues have also helped me find my way and my place in my new job, which was not that easy. They have been of great professional and emotional support.

A special thanks to the student who allowed me to use her work in the didactic part. All my students have meant a lot this year.

Lastly, I am grateful to my family and my friends, who had to put up with my stress and my doubts for two years. They helped me stay confident, and they gave me the strength and motivation to end this research paper, and be proud of it. They mean the world to me, and I wanted to thank them for their unconditional support.

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, there was a child lying in their bed, at night. Next to them were their father and mother, both sitting on their bed. The mother was smiling softly and watching her child falling asleep, while the father was reading a book aloud, mimicking the characters, and showing the pictures to his sleepy infant.

If this depiction sounds familiar to a lot of people, it is because it is typical of how Western societies like to envisage reading bedtime stories with children. Readers may well remember their own childhood, or think about the way they read these stories to their own children.

Bedtime stories and children's fiction in general have existed since the Middle Ages, if we count fables, myths and legends as such, even though at first they were orally transmitted. These stories are famous for their morals and examples of how to behave, and have been considered since the beginning as instructional help for parents to teach children how to behave properly and how to develop themselves. The democratisation of literacy helped these stories gain significance over time, and nowadays they are a major part of children's education and development.

Being so important for children's development, these stories have interested many scholars in literature, the human sciences and beyond, including child psychiatrists and specialists of pedagogy. The interest in these stories lies both in the recurrence of the motifs

and characteristics and in the evolution of the messages contained in the stories as their major aim have changed.

Nowadays, children's fiction is filled with fairy stories and extraordinary adventures that plunge children into fantasy worlds, and the point of these stories is less to educate them than to help them forge their personality and help them develop their own way of thinking.

While children's fiction is by definition a literary genre primarily aimed at the young and very young, we will see in this research paper how children's fiction can also target parents, who stand by their child during their development and are major actors in their education. This specific genre of children's fiction is codified, and respects different motifs and characteristics that all have different meanings (we can use as an example the traditional character of the evil step-mother, the good king etc.). This being said, one of the main interest in codes is the way authors try to break them, which will be another point studied in this paper.

It is important to notice that throughout the history of children's fiction, not only the same motifs but also the same myths are used. These myths changed as the oral tradition modelled them, and nowadays they obviously have a big influence on children's literature, with mythical animals and characters for example. These myths and legends, inherited from different countries' folklores, are familiar to both children and their parents, and we will argue, create a bond between generations.

This paper will ask to what extent traditional myths help parents get involved in their child's fiction. To this end, we will study first the notion of neomedievalism through traditional motifs and pictures, then we will discuss the legitimacy of the genre of children's fiction, to finally put forward the idea of children's fiction being aimed at both children and parents.

The notion of myth will be crucial to this research paper. It will be necessary to define it before starting any other study. We will start by offering as precise a description as possible of what a myth is before going on to discuss the meaning and the importance of myths in societies. We will focus on traditional myths that are familiar to a great number of people, such as the myth of King Arthur or Robin Hood.

The idea of neomedievalism is also significant: here, we will discuss the literary notion of neomedievalism, meaning a branch of post-modernism that appeared during the nineteenth century but that really took off after World War II. This literary genre is based on medieval-like stories, with a great importance of chivalry and classical myths and legends. Literary neomedievalism can also be seen as the base for many contemporary movies or series (the saga *Game Of Thrones*, by George R.R. Martin was adapted as a hugely successful series in 2011, and film versions of *The Lord Of The Rings* saga by J.R.R. Tolkien came out since 2001, for example). These other forms of neomedievalism, adapted from literature, will also be discussed in this research paper.

Children's fiction is the third main notion of this paper: we will discuss its history, how it evolved through time and how its meanings changed with generations. But mostly, we will expose the importance of this genre for the development of children, thanks to *The Uses Of Enchantment*, a major work by Bruno Bettelheim, who is a major child psychiatrist who worked on the effects of children's literature on the younger generation. This theory will be nuanced though, thanks notably to Jack Zipes' very different point of view.

To illustrate our study, we will use an example that corresponds to all the notions presented above: the saga *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), by J.K. Rowling, and in particular *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* (2001) that belongs to the *Harry Potter* saga extended universe. The *Harry Potter* saga is a cycle of seven novels, telling

the story of Harry Potter. When he is just a toddler, his parents are killed by a dark lord who tries and fails to kill the little boy. His aunt and uncle take him in, but hide away from him the truth that he is a wizard. When he turns 11, he attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; each tome of the saga recounts one year at this fantastic educational establishment. It is here that Harry will have to repeatedly face Voldemort, the dark lord who killed his parents, until the last volume where he will finally defeat him once and for all.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is a “fake-true book”, meaning J.K. Rowling wanted it to look like a real school book for the young wizards from the original saga. It is a guide for young witches and wizards to learn how to take care of fantastic creatures. This book is composed of a foreword from the fake author (Newt Scamander), and a bestiary with the description of the fantastic creatures, and many corresponding illustrations (drawn by Tomic Tomislav). We will use the edition dating from 2017. This example will help us illustrate all of our study.

The edition of 2017 is not the first one: the first edition dates back to 2001, nevertheless the edition of 2017 seemed to illustrate better the notion of neomedievalism. Tomic Tomislav’s illustrations of the ‘beasts’ greatly enhance the book, so much that this final version really looks like a medieval manuscript – or possibly a copy of Victorian neomedievalism, and therefore was more appropriate for the themes being analysed here.

1. NEOMEDIEVALISM: TRADITIONAL OR MODERN?

a. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF NEOMEDIEVALISM

Neomedievalism is not that recent a trend: its roots can be found in the nineteenth century and beyond. However the twentieth century saw a rebirth of the taste for fictional works based on chivalry, quests, ladies in distress and all sorts of dragons that has continued unabated. This trend is clearly visible in today's libraries, bookshops and on screen with examples such as *The Lord Of The Rings*, the classic saga by J.R.R. Tolkien, that has been in print since 1937 and, with 150 million copies sold, has been on the bestseller list ever since. A series of movie adaptations, directed by Peter Jackson, hit the big screen from 2001; the last instalment has generated profits of \$ 1 119 929 521 since its release. More recently, *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, an extensive work of literature by George R.R. Martin that has been published as a series of novels from 1991 onwards, was adapted as a very famous TV series from 2007 to 2019. Created by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss and broadcasted on the American channel HBO, the TV series is entitled *Game Of Thrones*, following the title of the first volume, *A Game Of Thrones*; in 2019, the last episode of the TV series attracted approximately 13.6 million viewers, on legal and illegal platforms, not to mention the many people who have watched the episode since then.

Interestingly enough, we will point out that in the top ten best-selling books, among which we can find *Alice's Adventures in*

Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (number six, 100 million copies sold), *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien (number seven, 100 million copies sold) and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling (number four, 120 million copies sold), eight out of ten are described as 'fantasy'.

Umberto Eco¹ writes: "If one does not trust 'literature', one should at least trust 'pop culture.'"² Indeed, if bookstore shelves are anything to go by, the Middle Ages are a huge source of fascination and inspiration today. Many of the works that came out and have been successful during the second half of the twentieth century and beyond are works set in a medieval-like universe. These works can be considered as part of popular culture, as they represent the tastes of general reading public, and have become an ongoing trend among children and adults.

Umberto Eco, an Italian specialist of neomedievalism and also author of *The Name Of The Rose* (1980), wrote *Travels in Hyperreality* in 1986 to theorise the genre of neomedievalism, by showing its impact on society. It is a major work in this field. In line with the examples given above, Eco sees this fascination for the Middle Ages extending beyond literature, to encompass movies or TV series -not only the aforementioned *Game Of Thrones* and *The Lord Of The Rings*, but all the movies dealing with the legend of King Arthur, or Robin Hood, or even all Disney movies based on medieval princesses such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) or even the pre-war *Snow-White and The Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Umberto Eco defines this interest as "a curious oscillation between fantastic neomedievalism and responsible philological examination."³ In other words, this trend is rather broad in scope as not only does it take in pseudo-medieval fantasies (with fantastical/mythological creatures and magic, for

¹ Umberto Eco (1932-2016) was an Italian novelist, literary critic, philosopher, semiotician, and university professor. He also wrote essays and academic texts. He was a specialist of the Middle Ages, and he also wrote children's fiction.

² ECO, U., *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver, ed. Helen and Kurt Wolff (Orlando, FL., 1986), pp. 61-62.

³ *ibid.*

example in *The Chronicles Of Narnia*, by C.S. Lewis from 1950 to 1956), but also a taste for more realistic representations of the Middle Ages (or representations that aspire to be realistic). For Eco, a good example of this second trend can be found in historical novels that became very popular in Victorian times (“the nineteenth century was the age of the historical novel, of Walter Scott and Victor Hugo”⁴). The Middle Ages, actually an extensive historical period, have long imposed themselves as an inspiration for this particular form of artistic creation that combines often extravagant fantasy together with historical fact.

Indeed even though the taste for neomedievalist literature has really taken root with a vengeance since *The Lord Of The Rings*, this trend already existed well before. As Umberto Eco argues, neomedievalism actually first emerged in early modern times: “immediately after the official ending of the Middle Ages, Europe was ravaged by a pervasive medieval nostalgia.”⁵ Ever since its decline, people in Europe (and later on in the United States, after it was colonised by Europeans) have been interested in this vast historical period, that is at once mysterious, and yet the base of our modern societies. Traditions, folklore and ways of thinking got developed at that time, and it is this which led to the notion of rooting in the Middle Ages, as if everything started then. This trend can be compared to that of Classical Antiquity, which has had a similar impact, even though the attachment to Classical roots was more visible during the period called the Renaissance (thirteenth to seventeenth centuries).

This notion of roots is very important in neomedievalism: there is a wish to get connected to the foundations of our society, to know where we came from. Umberto Eco writes that “all the problems of the Western world emerged in the Middle Ages.”⁶, meaning by this

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 64.

language, merchant cities and even the capitalistic society. To him, the heritage of that crucial period can be felt in the modern Western world, and feeling connected to it is therefore only natural. For many specialists of neomedievalism, this trend is not only literary, but also linked to the economy, as the Middle Ages were the starting point of our modern economic system. The combination of economy and literature gave birth to this modern trend which Eco reads as a wish to get back to how everything started in a way. As Umberto Eco writes: "In short, this is where modern Western man came to maturity, and it is in this sense that a model of the Middle Ages can help us understand what is happening in our own day."⁷ Western societies are the way they are thanks to the Middle Ages, and it is a great opportunity for people to be able to read neomedievalist literature in order to face the everyday.

Of course neomedievalism is also a way for people to escape their modern reality, even though at the beginning, as Eco argues, neomedievalism was driven by a desire to gain an accurate view of their cultural and historical roots. In its Victorian infancy, neomedievalism expressed a search for authenticity, but over time it has become clear that neomedievalism is also escapist, and that people were reluctant to embrace the problems that appeared during the Middle Ages.

Our return to the Middle Ages is a quest for our roots and, since we want to come back to the real roots, we are looking for "reliable Middle Ages", not for romance or fantasy, though frequently this wish is misunderstood and, moved by a vague impulse, we indulge in a sort of escapism à la Tolkien.⁸

The term 'indulge' that is used by Eco shows clearly the hierarchy he builds between realism and escapism. A modern reading of this standpoint will nuance it, as nowadays we can see that escapism may not be considered as a way to flee problems: neomedievalism belonging to entertainment, it is obvious that people

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 65.

shall use it to escape reality, but 'entertainment' doesn't necessarily mean it is of lower interest or value. People have a certain need to escape, a need that dates back to childhood. Some problems need to be faced, but sometimes facing problems head on is not the best way: sometimes a little bit of fantasy is a good way to create a projection of our problems within literature. We shall add that escapism is as important as realism: they are complementary, and only together and equal can they make a good piece of neomedievalism.

b. POST MODERNISM AND NEOMEDIEVALISM

Now that we understand the neomedievalist trend better, we might well wonder how it came to be that neomedievalism was related to post-modernism: post-modernism is a quite recent large genre in literature, that appeared since the end of World War II. It is described on [britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy) as a “late 20th-century movement characterized by broad scepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.”⁹: in the light of what we have outlined in our discussion about neomedievalism, it could feel strange to link these two genres.

Still, we may nuance our argument by pointing out similarities between these concepts: Umberto Eco’s view of neomedievalism we discussed earlier seems to echo postmodernism’s “general suspicion of reason”, as a rejection of the Enlightenment rationalism and a desire to get back to a more mystical standpoint, itself linked to the crucial notion of escapism. Also, neomedievalism can sometimes involve a reflexion on the political and economic order: the Middle Ages, as the roots of our modern system, often provide a good starting point for any criticism.

We will find some answers thanks to Linda Hutcheon in her work entitled *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: in this work, she tries to give

⁹ DUIGNAN, B., “Postmodernism”, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy> (cons. 12/17/19, last edited 09/20/19)

a definition to this complex cultural trend. In particular, some elements can help us understand the close link between post-modernism and neomedievalism. Perhaps most importantly Linda Hutcheon defines post-modernism as “fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political.”¹⁰, thereby placing these three crucial concepts at the roots of post-modernism. These three notions are interconnected, and serve each other, meaning the history used in post-modern works serves the contradictions between the past and present, and these contradictions are used to point out political problems, as we can read “these contradictions are certainly manifest in the important post-modern concept of ‘the presence of the past.’”¹¹ Here we can see how important the past is as regards politics and economy, which is one of the main reasons why neomedievalism has taken on such importance in literature nowadays. With this definition by Linda Hutcheon, we can finally get also the sense of “critical reworking”¹² in neomedievalism, that was possibly lacking in Umberto Eco’s appraisal.

Linda Hutcheon also defines another very important concept in post-modernism, even another branch of this genre, which is historiographic metafiction: this genre is composed of what she calls “popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages,”¹³ which to us sounds like a perfect description of what a neomedievalist fiction is: a novel, based on past events, past characters, that help us rethink our present. To her, it incorporates literature, history and post-modernist theory, meaning “its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking of the forms and contents of the past.”¹⁴ In other words, it is part of

¹⁰ HUTCHEON, L., *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, ed. Routledge (Oxon, 1988), p. 4.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

human nature to always compare past and present, and to try to understand the past as it was and what it means nowadays.

With all this, we can now obviously rethink contemporary neomedievalism as part of post-modernism, as one of its fundamental purposes is to make people rethink their present with retrospectives on their society's past. The Middle Ages being the foundation stone of modern Western society, it is natural to want to revisit this period to get a proper view of our current behaviours, problems and systems, as it is also natural to use neomedievalism to offer a new representation of the present as well: past and present being interconnected, and the Middle Ages being so important in modern society, neomedievalism is an appealing and attractive way to imagine new representations both of the past and the present.

Neomedievalism is not only a literature genre, a branch of post-modernism or even a philosophical trend. Nor is it a word that many people are familiar with, even though they are confronted with what it defines almost every day. As we argued above, there are, nowadays, countless examples of novels, child books, sagas, TV series, movies etc. about the Middle Ages, and what is interesting to see in all these examples are the similarities that exist between them. As this trend is motivated by a real need from people, this genre respects codes that help readers (and viewers) feel confident while discovering a story. That is also why this trend is a long-lasting one, because readers who once were children are nowadays grown-ups, who have an easy access to neomedieval works that are more adapted to their age and needs, while they can also read and show to their own children the novels and movies or TV series they appreciated as children. It comes full circle, which helps this genre's durability.

c. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MYTH

What exactly is a myth? This deceptively simple question is, actually, very hard to answer. A myth can be a host of things, while remaining a concept that is far more abstract than it may initially seem. Still, everyone has already heard about a myth: every civilisation has its own myths and legends. So we will begin by proposing a definition, for the purposes of the following study, even as we accept its necessary limitations: a myth, at first, is a story shared by a lot of people, and whose basic representation remains constant, even though the oral tradition changed sometimes some details of the story from one geographical zone to another, as the French scholar of comparative literature Jean-Louis Backès explains:

Indeed, myths seem to be in general characterised by two aspects, among others: an anonymous origin and a quite numerous audience ; it is a collective representation that has a rather obscure prehistory.¹⁵

These myths are stories that have been told and retold for so long that no one can really remember where they came from in the first place. There is also no way to tell with certitude who the author is exactly: these are stories that are passed from one generation to the next, and though sometimes we can trace them until the period they first appeared, there is also no way to tell with certitude who the author is exactly.

¹⁵ BACKES, J-L., *Le Mythe dans les littératures d'Europe*, trans. by the author, Cerf Littérature (Paris, 2010), pp. 12-13.

Another important feature of a myth is the way people keep talking about it: “it is a story from the past that comes back, that is being told under different forms, that is often mentioned.”¹⁶ The main characteristic of a myth is that it is known by a very wide number of people, and it is a story that is repeated and used in many different ways. It is a story that, when it is told, reminds people of something they have already heard. It doesn’t sound new or different. People are linked by this story, because they all know the beginning and the end.

We can therefore here understand what makes a myth: it is the fact that there are unvarying features in every story, details that are the same from one version to the other: “as we are facing an object that has multiple variations, that is perhaps defined by this surprising ability to vary, we look for a certain type of stability.”¹⁷ People will always look for the details they know from the story and that change a simple story into a myth. The common point can for example be the simple name of the character at the centre of the myth (Robin Hood for example), which will remind people of a dozen different stories and other characters linked to this myth. A myth is a way to gather people together, around something they all know.

What makes a myth so difficult to define is also its tendency to get mixed up with other notions, such as the notion of *legend*.

Another way to perceive the uncertain space where some words such as ‘myth’ are floating is to ask about the simple notion of ‘synonym’. Two words seem to have very close meanings ; ‘myth’ and ‘legend’ for example. [...] We can also, in an archaic way, say ‘it is a fable’. [...] ‘Fable’, ‘myth’ and ‘legend’ tend therefore to get confused. [...] Of course, it doesn’t mean those three words are always synonyms. All that we can say, supposing geometrical metaphors are useful enough in this case, is that their semantical surface area sometimes meets.¹⁸

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 15-17.

A *legend*, a *myth* and a *fable* are three notions that are deeply connected, very often confused, but that still have their own implications. Sometimes they are used to define stories from different contexts (a myth would then be more appropriate for a story from Antiquity, while a legend would fit for a story about the Middle Ages perfectly), but we decided in this work to focus on the notion of *myth*, the difference being here that a legend is a whole story, about different characters meeting, a situation, a development, an end. Legends can differ depending on the versions, but all in all they are very similar. A myth would be different in the idea that it is more about something which is not as clearly defined as a legend: we rarely have a whole story, a myth is rather based on one character or creature. Thus we can speak of the myth of Apollo, the myth of Athena or the myth of the Loch Ness monster.

A fable differs further as, in most cases, it will offer a moral at the end. It is a complete narrative, that has very often one very widely accepted version, contrary to all the different versions that compose myths and legends. This notion of a moralistic tone is sometimes also attached to the idea of *myth*, as Jean-Louis Backès explains: "It has been thought [...] that all myths had a function to illustrate a philosophical reflexion, that they had to answer the big questions of Humanity."¹⁹ This moral is, in fact, not necessary to make a myth. It is more of a supposition that grew in people's minds, as they often looked for 'hidden messages' in myths.

A similar idea is that myths always try to explain a cause, for example how olive trees appeared close to the city of Olympia in Ancient Greece, or how Humanity discovered how to create fire: "examples are countless, so numerous that we sometimes naively believe that all myths are etiological, that 'myth' seems to imply 'speech about causes.'"²⁰ But in fact, a myth has nothing to do with any sort of need and norm: a myth doesn't have to be moralistic, to

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 157.

tell the story of a cause, to teach anything to anyone. What a myth is, and here is the definition that we will use in this work, is the common idea of a people about a creature or a character (real or imaginary). Myths from a people, a certain geographical zone, brought together, create what we call *folklore*, meaning a given people's stories and beliefs that have been gathered over time.

With the arrival of Christianity, which took over the major part of the Western world, folklore continued to prosper as it was incorporated into religious doctrine. These myths were not abandoned, which is very important for us nowadays, as it also offers a means to discover a people's way of thinking before Christianity: "Triumphant Christianity chose not to reject into outer darkness the treasures of poetry offered by Ancient Greece and Rome."²¹ While J.L. Backès refers almost exclusively to Ancient Greece and Rome, my definition extends to all other folklores that existed before Christianity: indeed, thanks to oral traditions and Christianity's practice of retaining old stories and myths, societies continued to pass its stories on to the younger generations.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 178.

d. NEOMEDIEVALIST BESTIARIES AND ICONOGRAPHY

A myth would not be complete if no one had ever drawn the character or creature described in the aforementioned myth. In the same way, when one speaks of medieval manuscripts, one of the first things that pops into your mind is the technique of *illumination*, whether you know the name or not. In other words, iconography is one of the major notion that we will have to explore in this research paper.

The neomedievalist genre is, itself, very much based on iconography: as a literary mode that in its way copies and recreates the Middle Ages, illustrating the works is very important. Also, the importance of pictures relies on the fact that myth being often about fantastic creatures, they need to be represented, authors need to provide the readers with a visual representation.

Style is very important in neomedievalist iconography. For a text to really look like a medieval manuscript, there are codes and a procedure to be respected. We have already talked about illuminations, which is a very special technique of iconography: it is the name given to the way monks in monasteries used to paint around the first letter of a manuscript page, often in very vivid colours. At that period (the main period for illuminations being the end of the Middle Ages), colouring the manuscripts was a very popular art.

The technique of illumination was used for many different types of manuscripts, and that is why it is very important for the neomedievalist genre nowadays. Illumination helps a work appear more “authentic”, more similar to a medieval work. This practice of imitation precedes the contemporary wave of neomedievalism however, as the following example demonstrates.



UNKNOWN, Illumination of an 'S', in *Psalterium Nocturnum* (Caltanissetta, seventeenth century).

As we can see, this illumination, found in a manuscript from the seventeenth century, represents the letter ‘S’. It has been decorated with orange and dark-pink flowers, and the letter itself looks like it is formed by blue, orange or pale-green feathers. The whole letter is surrounded by gold paint. This is a very traditional illumination, brightly coloured and exposing wealth and technical expertise.

We have a perfect example of modern illuminations with *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, which features very beautiful illuminations. Every page begins with an illumination

around the first letter (corresponding to the first letter of the creature's name, as the classification is in the alphabetical order), and fine drawings of flowers around the page number. The drawings are all in black and white, which gives another impression of age, even though traditional illuminations were very bright and coloured. This is one of the first things that strikes us about this novel and that makes us think about neomedievalism: it shows a desire for the text to look medieval.



TOMISLAV, Tomic, Illumination of an 'S', in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Bloomsbury Publishing (London, 2017), p.79.

This 'modern' illumination, though it appears very different from the seventeenth-century one, still corresponds to the codes of medieval illumination: it has been decorated with fauna and flora, themes that are very often used to decorate letters in manuscripts. All the lines are very round and soft, there are almost no right angles, except for the borders of the frame. Still, what is interesting here is how the illustrator, Tomic Tomislav, successfully combined the old,

with the idea itself of illumination, and the new, with a very modern font for the letter 'S' and a good use of the black and grey nuances.

This work may also remind us of the engravings of the Victorian artist and writer William Morris, who produced many neomedievalist works such as the one below.



MORRIS, William, engraved by HARCOURT HOOPER, William, Wood-engraving (England, 1912. Visible in Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

This last example shows how neomedievalism is really like a huge shared work, as if the artists all worked together. Here, the artworks by Tomic Tomislav in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* could almost be imitations of William Morris's work, itself a copy of a 'genuine' medieval manuscript.

Bestiaries manuscripts that focused on animals and creatures were a very important genre in medieval times. In their most traditional form, bestiaries draw up a simple list of all the animals known at the time, but others tried to create a list of fantastic creatures, belonging to the country's folklore, and that is where we get interested, because it is this which makes *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* not simply a novel containing illuminations, but a complete neomedievalist novel, created on the basis of a very specific genre that was popular in the Middle Ages.

So as to set up a meaningful comparison, we have decided to use another bestiary (a 'real' one, so to speak): *Physiologos : le bestiaire des bestiaires*,²² which is a translation in French from the original Greek text gathering the presentations, definitions and modern analysis of a huge number of fantastic creatures belonging to Ancient European folklore (and also from many other places). This very bestiary, unusual due to the modern analysis that was added later on to the original Christian-based depiction, is based on an analysis of a large number of creatures, explaining the meaning of their existence and what they represented for peoples from different periods. It is mainly based on a Christian representation of creatures, studying the way the Church saw them, and how the Church used them to transmit messages to people.

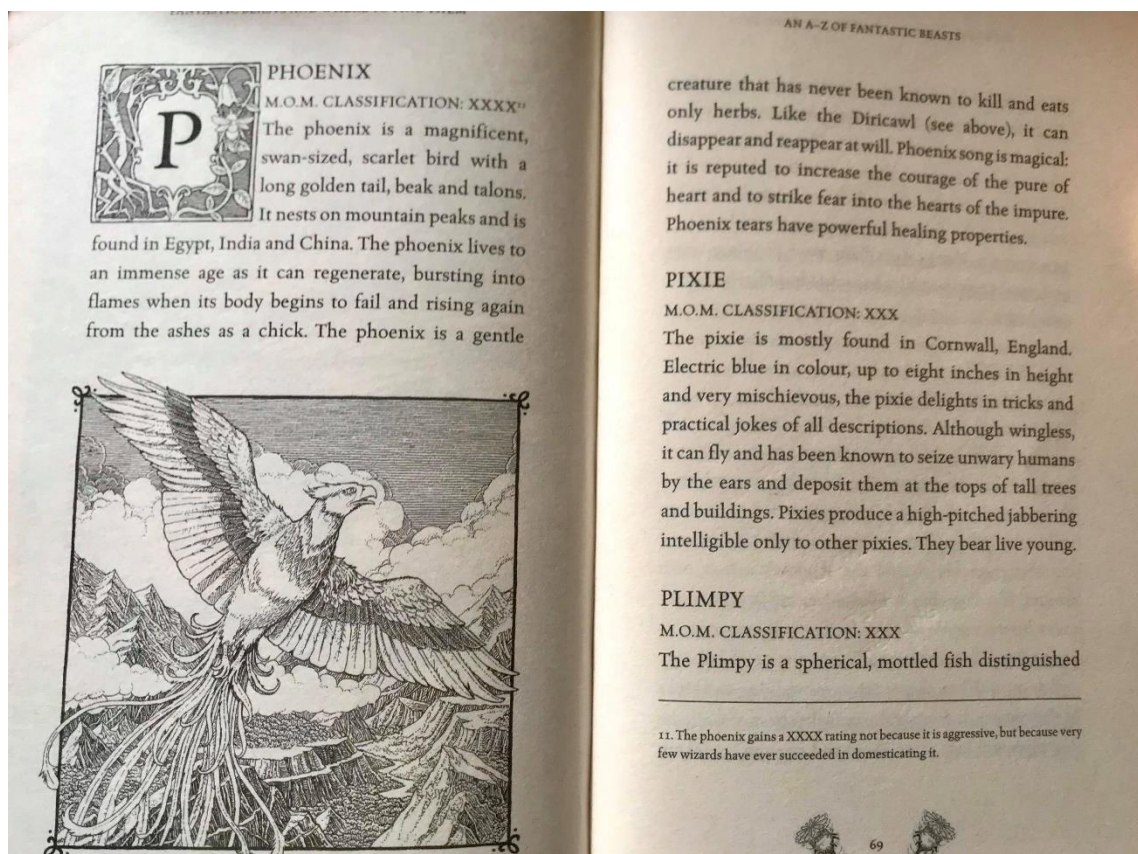
Studying *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* and the *Physiologos* together, it was striking to notice how many creatures were present in both works. Yet, stemming from the same geographical area, and being thematically linked across time (one being partly from the Middle Ages, and the other trying to recreate the Middle Ages), meeting the same creatures in those two works was perhaps to be expected. Folklore being composed of shared myths and legends, it would have been surprising for two fantastic bestiaries originating in Europe not to have creatures in common.

To illustrate the many similarities and common characteristics that were to be found across the pages, we have decided to present, here, two examples belonging to both *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* and the *Physiologos*. We thought interesting the idea of comparing the two collections that were separated across time, but still expressions of a shared folklore.

The first example is that of the Phoenix: this fantastic creature is known for its capacity to burn at the end of its life, and resuscitate

²² ZUCKER, A., *Physiologos : le bestiaire des bestiaires*, trans. by the author, ed. Jérôme Millon (Grenoble, 2004).

from its ashes. It has become a symbol of rebirth and of overcoming past difficulties. In *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, we are given a description that will strike a chord with many readers: “a magnificent, swan-sized, scarlet bird with a long golden tail, beak and talons.” The bestiary entry here is completed with his renowned ability to rise from the ashes, and sounds very familiar to a Western reader’s ear. But one very interesting detail, is that of its origins: in this work, the Phoenix is said to be from Egypt, China and India.



ROWLING, Joanne K., and TOMISLAV, Tomic, *Phoenix*, in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Bloomsbury Publishing (London, 2017), pp. 68-69.

We can see here a beautiful representation of a flying phoenix, made by Tomic Tomislav: the illustrator clearly wanted to represent the bird’s magnificence, and help children reading this book imagine the phoenix the way it is represented most of the time.

It is striking that the author uses the country of India as the origin of the Phoenix: for many people, the myth of the Phoenix can’t be situated. Here lies the interest of comparing this entry from

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them with the equivalent in a work such as the *Physiologos*: it helps understand some details from myths we all are sure to know by heart. In the entry of the Phoenix, it is stated that “there is in India a bird called Phoenix.”²³ This very simple sentence suggests in one line that the myth we all know is in fact Indian in origin. According to the *Physiologos*, in India, it is a priest who sets the Phoenix on fire every five hundred years, before it comes back from the ashes as a worm first, and then a baby bird.

It is fascinating to discover the origins of a myth, and to see that this myth has never changed even though it has travelled across continents, and overtime. The common notion in all the different versions of the myth of the Phoenix is the one of life and death. We can see here that the point of a myth is not only to entertain, but also to give a representation to an abstract notion. That is probably the reason why myths don’t change that much over time: as older generations pass the stories and their meanings onto the younger ones they still keep their inner meaning.

Our second example is that of the unicorn: this myth has made a big comeback in Western society over recent years, as a symbol of cuteness. But the myth of the unicorn dates back to the very beginning of the Middle Ages, when people used to believe the unicorn’s horn had magical and curative properties. Nevertheless, the unicorn’s origins are much more complicated than we might imagine. Indeed, in the *Physiologos*, it is said that unicorns, at first, are “the suspended metamorphosis of a rhinoceros into a lamb. [...] A mix between softness and strength, fierce and untamed combined.”²⁴ This description is absolutely not what we are used to, and still, it is the original myth, which was probably created at first from a mistranslation from old Greek: “Here again the origins of the animal was mainly born from a translation misunderstanding and a

²³ ZUCKER, A., *Physiologos : le bestiaire des bestiaires*, trans. by the author, ed. Jérôme Millon (Grenoble, 2004), p. 83.

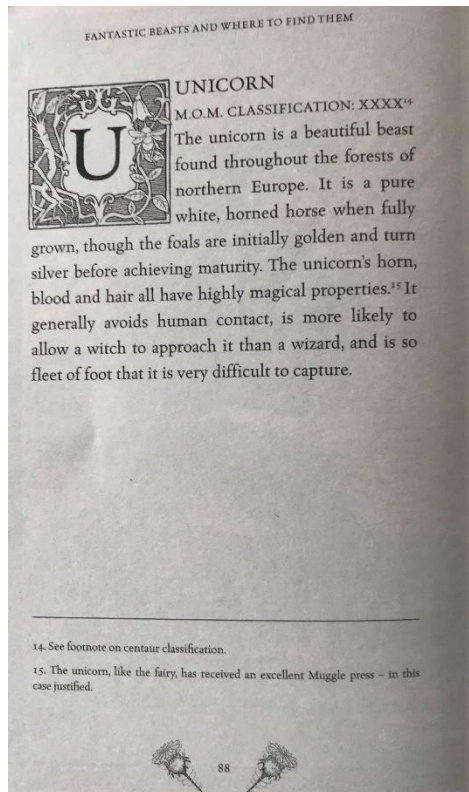
²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 156.

cultural distortion.”²⁵ Since its creation the unicorn has carried a very ambiguous meaning as both a symbol of strength and softness, of virility and chastity; it is in fact a myth that symbolises the ambiguousness of our nature, and our need for a balance between extremes.

In *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, the unicorn has a much more modern definition: it is described as a very pure creature, “a beautiful beast found throughout the forests of northern Europe.”²⁶ There is no mention of its ambivalent personality, nor of its characteristic strength, probably because here the author tried to stick to a modern representation of the creature. Still, we notice that the notion of purity and chastity (the unicorn from this bestiary prefers meeting witches to wizards) are still very present, though not really explained. The main difference here relies on the purpose of those two works: the *Physiologos* claims a scientific purpose, namely to study the implications of such myths on the society of the time. In *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, however, the purpose remains primarily commercial: the main objective is to entertain, and to remind people of the universe of a saga they love. Therefore, the second may not sound as serious, and some descriptions are made to fit the reader’s presumed desires and expectations and not always instruct him or her about the myth’s origin.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁶ ROWLING, J.K., *op cit.*, p. 88.



ROWLING, Joanne K., and TOMISLAV, Tomic, *Unicorn*, in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Bloomsbury Publishing (London, 2017), pp. 88-89.

Tomic Tomislav's representation of the unicorn shows a very modern unicorn, the kind of creature a child would draw nowadays. As for the written entry in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, the ambiguous and unclear origins of this creature have been forgotten on purpose here. The point was to make a clear and uncomplicated bestiary, easy to understand for all.

We can see with these examples of myths that the representation we have of a mythical creature depends largely on its meaning for a given society. But if meanings change to a lesser or greater degree, they still reflect the way we see abstract notions such as life and death, fear, attachment to roots or even an ambivalent personality. These myths are kept alive by being transmitted from one generation to another, and they keep something of their original meaning because of the way we like feeling connected to what we believe to be our roots and create an imagined community of belonging. They are the "image of our

communion”, as says the historian Benedict Anderson of the workings of national identity²⁷.

These myths are interesting to study also because they are very famous: they are ‘genuine’ myths, in the sense that they are commonly known. The particularity of *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* is that the author succeeded in making these myths accessible to both children and their parents who want to share these stories with their offspring.

²⁷ ANDERSON, B. *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed. Verso (London, 2006), p. 22.

2. CHILDREN'S FICTION: A LEGITIMATE GENRE

a. A TIMELINE OF CHILDREN'S FICTION

Children's fiction is a major literary genre today. The necessity for children to hear stories as they grow up is widely acknowledged among child psychiatrists, and it has been so for a wide period of time. It is commonly accepted among specialists of children's fiction that the greatest shift that happened for this genre came with the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll, 1865): the genre shifted from an educational and moralistic tone towards fantasy, using dreams and sometimes absurd humour and descriptions to entice the potential reader. Therefore, we will use this marker in our timeline of children's fiction to discuss the main changes that happened through time for this very particular form of literature.

Stories for children have always more or less existed. Still, since Western societies had not acquired the technique of writing before the late prehistoric period and, more importantly, of printing before the 15th century, children's fiction had no way of being disseminated. Moreover, it was only during the 18th century that the concept of *childhood* began to gain a real importance in psychology, which led to a stronger interest in the uses of children's literature.

Children's fiction began with old oral stories, that were told by adults during community gatherings for example. The very earliest

forms of written children's literature were educational in nature and sometimes lacked any story at all. At the outset they were only meant to educate the offspring of nobility and highborn youth – teaching to little girls how to properly manage a house and children for example. There was already a trend also for fables and moralistic tales, such as the *Fables* of La Fontaine (1668-1694), which helped parents teach their children how to behave, how to live and how to be prudent and smart. Jack Zipes, the famous American academic and folklorist, wrote about the early forms of written children's fiction in these terms:

Almost all critics who have studied the emergence of the literary fairy tale in Europe agree that educated writers purposely appropriated the oral folktale and converted it into a type of literary discourse about mores, values, and manners so that children and adults would become civilized according to the social code of that time.¹

It is with Lewis Carroll's major work in 1865 that children's fiction really emerged as an entertaining genre: indeed, to Jan Susina, "the book may appear to be an eccentric, but brilliant, text having little to do with previously published children's literature."² Writers began to consider children as real readers (or listeners), and not only young adults that needed to get educated. With *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, absurd writing became a real trend, and with it came fantasy and other genres for children. The educational purpose got blurred after 1865, but still it did not disappear completely: it was simply transformed, to be less obvious. In a fable, the moral at the end (or, rarely, at the beginning) of the story is obvious, and the whole story is meant to guide the reader to that moral. In a novel such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the educational meaning is less obviously accessible, hidden behind motifs that are recurrent in this genre.

A motif may be defined as a character, a colour, an animal etc. that is recurrent in an artistic style, and that carries a special

¹ ZIPES, J., *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Routledge (New York, 2012), p. 3.

² SUSINA, J., *The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children's Literature*, Routledge (New York, 2010).

meaning. For example, the colour red is typically related to the notion of violence, blood, aggressiveness or anger. A lion will represent strength, power and sometimes majesty. Children's fiction makes ample use of motifs, in particular in relation to recurrent characters that children know: the main purpose is to make them feel confident, to give them some known markers, so that they don't feel afraid to step into unknown concepts. It is the best way to make them discover without feeling lost or scared. These motifs, or symbols, are important because they enable the child to think about their own problems, as Bruno Bettelheim³ explains: "for the child himself, real events become important through the symbolic meaning he attaches to them, or which he finds in them."⁴

Nowadays, children's fiction tends to follow the same line that appeared with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*: fantasy stories, full of motifs or symbols that lead them to reflect upon their own existence. There is no obvious moral, and *sagas*, *series* or *cycles* of novels have become increasingly popular, a trend that is explained by Anne Besson, a French literature scholar:

The appeal of episodic forms, in particular novels, is widely linked to the appeal of repetition – repetition and evolution: seeing again loved heroes coming back, the now familiar other world. This taste of the child is essential to approach the text and it enables him on the one hand to tame his fears and on the other hand to build life and behaviour models.⁵

Our focus in this research paper is the modern children's fiction that emerged from all the evolution that happened in the wake of Lewis Carroll's landmark text. We will attempt to define the characteristics of this literary genre in the pages that follow.

³ Bruno Bettelheim (1903-1990) is a famous Austrian born child psychiatrist. He wrote many books about children psychology, in particular about emotionally disturbed children. He was one of the first who thought that disturbed children could be cured through therapy and not with shock therapy or psychotropic drugs.

⁴ BETTELHEIM, B., *The Uses of Enchantment*, ed. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (New York, 1975), p. 62.

⁵ BESSON, A., *La Littérature de jeunesse en question(s)*, trans. by the author, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, dir. PRINCE, N. (Rennes, 2009), p. 121.

b. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN'S FICTION

Any literary genre is distinguished by specific characteristics: these characteristics are what enable specialists to categorise novels or short stories into appropriate genres, and while these characteristics might change over time, some similarities remain.

Modern children's fiction genre is full of different characteristics, but the major one would probably be the way it helps children grow properly. This theory was explored by Bruno Bettelheim in his work *The Uses Of Enchantment*⁶.

First of all, not only fairy tales -perhaps the most obvious example- but the whole of children's fiction genre are used as guides for children, models to try to develop oneself in the right way, according to Bruno Bettelheim. This is a real need, because childhood is the only moment when an individual can control his basic development. Still, children are not always aware of this control, and of the necessity of taking the right path: therefore, fiction is a simple tool for them to use as a modelling example. Bruno Bettelheim explains that "fairy tales offer figures onto which the child can externalize what goes on in his mind, in controllable ways,"⁷ which shows that the child can control what is happening while discovering a fairy tale, and use it to sort out his own emotions. This is a way to face and find a solution to inner problems and reflections.

⁶ BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁷ *Ibid.*

One challenge for children is to understand and live with ambiguous feelings. Indeed, while children are always being told to be well behaved, they frequently entertain feelings of jealousy, cruelty or meanness in their minds. Dealing with these “contradictory tendencies”⁸ can be very difficult. That is where fairy tales can have a powerful meaning :

When all the child’s wishful thinking gets embodied in a good fairy; all his destructive wishes in an evil witch; all his fears in a voracious wolf; all the demands of his conscience in a wise man encountered on an adventure; all his jealous anger in some animal that pecks out the eyes of his arch-rivals – then the child can finally begin to sort out his contradictory tendencies.⁹

In order to grow, a child needs to find out who they are, to find their identity, as Bettelheim observes: “as soon as a child begins to move and explore, he begins to ponder the problem of his identity.”¹⁰ This notion is very important, as a children’s novel is usually meant to be read aloud by their parent. For Bettelheim, even though the child needs their parent(s) in order to develop, their psychological growth is also very much determined by the child themselves. This double development, by the child and by their parent(s), is very important.

Another use of children’s fiction works is the safety children need while growing up. We have already seen that children use these stories as the receptacle for their emotions which are embodied in generic characters¹¹. This suggests that children need and create a sort of continuity between their life and the story they read. Children can also use these stories to seek safety from an environment they might not feel to be secure: “a child, as long as he is not sure his immediate human environment will protect him, needs to believe that superior powers, such as a guardian angel, watch over him.”¹² A work of children’s fiction can, therefore, provide the child with a reassuring figure such as a magical good fairy.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 47.

¹¹ Characters that appear in a lot of works of a certain genre, as representations of a feeling, emotion etc. (for example the wolf representing fear in children’s fiction).

¹² BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.* p. 52.

This yearning for safety is also linked to a desire for recognition: a child inhabits a unique environment, where they need to and can understand everything. Anything that can't be rationally explained will have a magical explanation for the child, because everything needs to be explained. The problem is that this fantasised world of children's is different from the "down-to-earth" world of adults: this difference in apprehending the world around us can create a gap between the child and the adult. "If the child is told only stories that are 'true to reality' (which means false to important parts of his inner reality), then he may conclude that much of his inner reality is unacceptable to his parents."¹³ This quotation underlines the fact that children need to be understood, even though their reality is different from adults'. They need their parents to show them that their reality matters, and this can be done for example by accepting this reality and reading children's fiction works that are filled with magic and fantasised elements, elements that fit with the children's representation of the world.

Fairy tales and works of children's fiction can also be used to help children learn how to tackle their problems, or to escape reality: children are not always mature enough to understand and solve the problems or tragedies they may face during their life. Therefore, very often, fantasy will become their escape door to another world, where first they can control everything, and second they can understand everything. The reality in these works corresponds more or less to their reality, as Bettelheim argues "a child trusts what the fairy story tells, because its world view accords with his own,"¹⁴ and this is very important to feel safe as we already said, but also to feel able to solve problems. These works can help them learn how to solve problems by themselves, which is very important for a healthy mental development.

Recent dream research has shown that a person deprived of dreaming, even though not deprived of sleep, is nevertheless impaired in his ability to manage reality; he becomes emotionally disturbed because of being unable to work out in dreams the unconscious problems that beset him.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 65.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 63.

This quotation stresses the importance of dreaming for adults, as ways to escape, yet still manage, reality. It shows that being out of reality does not mean being out of one's problems. Fairy tales have the same importance for children as dreams for adults: "the stories help the child work through unconscious pressures in fantasy."¹⁶ In fact, getting plunged into a world that is different from reality helps children understand and solve problems that seem 'too real'. They can, just like their emotions, transform these problems into archetypal characters or situations, and solve them more easily.

However for Bettelheim, the most important aspect in fairy tales, when it comes to children's development, is the difference between this genre and myths or fables: the moral. Indeed, "the answers given by myths are definite, while the fairy tale is suggestive; its messages may imply solutions, but it never spells them out."¹⁷ In order to grow as an individual, to develop a personality, a child needs to be able to trust themselves when it comes to finding the solution. Therefore, a fairy tale where the child is only guided is better adapted as it does not give the answer: the child still has to think about it and try to find the solution for themselves. "Fairy tales leave to the child's fantasizing whether and how to apply to themselves what the story reveals about life and human nature."¹⁸ In the end, the child may not create everything, but they are still in control to imagine the solution, the answer, the message inside the fairy story.

Motifs and stereotypes are very important also in children's fiction. There is a clear link between all types of children's fiction, and many details are shared between them. One clear aspect of children's fiction is the black-and-white view of the world: children need this stability, they have to know from the beginning whom they can trust. This trust will lead them to trust people in the 'real' world: if they are disappointed by their hero in the story, they may have issues trusting others.

Even though there are always different layers of reading, in the end it tends to be stereotypes that form the cornerstone of children's fiction: we expect evil witches, sweet and beautiful princesses and brave princes. These codes are

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

changing these days, with new types of heroes such as the rebel princess Merida from the Disney movie *Brave* (2012), or the underdog saviour Flynn Rider in Disney's *Tangled* (2010), who is initially an outlaw, but the pattern remains the same: the Good defeats the Bad. Children need to know from the beginning and to be confirmed at the end that the Good is better than the Bad, even if the Bad is powerful.

Children's fiction is also characterised by a singular taste for repetition: this taste is very probably due to the need for security. This need is not only felt by children, but also by parents, but as children don't have the same extensive knowledge, they don't have a lot of things in which they can trust.

Indeed, according to Bettelheim, children have a special characteristic which makes them understand only what they are able to see, or what they know from experience: Bruno Bettelheim uses here the example of gravity and its attraction on Earth.

To tell a child that the Earth floats in space, attracted by gravity into circling around the sun, but that the Earth doesn't fall to the sun as the child falls to the ground, seems very confusing to him. The child knows from his experience that everything has to rest on something, or be help up by something. Only an explanation based on that knowledge can make him feel he understands better about the Earth in space. More important, to feel secure on Earth, the child needs to believe that this world is held firmly in place. Therefore he finds a better explanation in a myth that tells him that the Earth rests on a turtle, or is help up by a giant.¹⁹

From this quotation, we can see that children hope for an explanation to the world that they can understand: repetitions here are important, because as childhood goes, parents and children's fiction can become more and more complex in their explanation for the world, leading the child to an understanding that is completely impossible to imagine at their first age. The child needs to be in a trusted environment in order to try and step into the unknown, as we argued earlier.

Children may not have a very reasonable vision from the world, but it is their own, and it is the way they found to explain, trust and control things. The aministic

¹⁹ BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.* p. 48.

view is another example of this need to control the world: the animistic view is that perspective of the world through which children believe that inanimate objects and animals can think, or talk, like human beings. It is described in Bruno Bettelheim's work, in which we understand here again the clear necessity for children to understand things. Still, as they lack maturity and knowledge to apprehend the world the way an adult would, they have to find other, palpable explanations. Here the animistic view and the stereotyped and mystified explanations are very important. Repetitions will, later on, lead the child towards more reasonable explanations.

But as we have seen that children might prefer the answer given by a myth rather than the answer from adults, we may ask ourselves why myths and classic fables are losing their power nowadays. We can clearly see that traditional tales are less and less read, leaving their status to modern children's fiction, which features many and varied characteristics.

The answer might be, here again, in the notion of *understanding*: ever since it first appeared, the main goal of children's fiction has been to help children comprehend the outside world and their inner universe. Still, there have been different trends, different ways to make children understand through time. Old myths and fables most often concluded (or opened) on a moral, meaning a sentence, a paragraph containing the central explanation for the myth, and what children had to take from it. One example could be the opening of this classic Irish folktale about fairies (called here the *wee folk*):

Ay, it's a bad thing to displease the wee folk, sure enough – they can be unfriendly if they're angered, an' they can be the very best o' gude neighbours if they're treated kindly.²⁰

Here there is a very clear moral: be kind and you will have no problems with other people. This is a very familiar moral, as we can read in classic children's stories (don't talk to strangers in *Little Red Riding Hood*, don't let people you don't know into your house in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, etc.). According to

²⁰ McCLINTOCK, L., *A Donegal Fairy*, in *Irish Folk and Fairy Tales*, The Blackstaff Press (Belfast, 2009), p. 22.

Bruno Bettelheim, this would indicate that these stories should be viewed as myths rather than fairy tales:

The answers given by myths are definite, while the fairy tale is suggestive; its messages may imply solutions, but it never spells them out. Fairy tales leave to the child's fantasizing whether and how to apply to himself what the story reveals about life and human nature.²¹

But Bettelheim's view may be nuanced as on many aspects, *Little Red Riding Hood* and this 'wee folk' story we quoted before can be referenced to as fairy tales. Therefore, it is important to underline that the limit between the different categories of children's literature is blurred: the analysis Bettelheim offers may be interesting, but we would rather explain the shift that we have observed in children's fiction not with their belonging to the fairy tales genre or not, but rather with the wide period of time that separate two works. Two stories may well both belong to the genre of fairy tales, if they are from different centuries we would expect the message and the values it celebrates to be different.

A more recent fairy tale will therefore correspond more to Bettelheim's view of the fairy tale: a story that adapts to the child's vision of the world. Recent works accept that children all have their own vision of things, of their world, of their surrounding environment, and that they need explanations that fit with this special vision. If they are told directly what to think, if the moral is spelled out, it may not be coherent with their vision of things, and therefore induce a feeling of lack of recognition of their point of view. It is better therefore to let their imagination and logic do the work, and find an explanation that will satisfy the child.

According to Bettelheim, the child will, from this moment, begin the journey towards understanding on their own, even though they will always be accompanied by their parents and adult relatives. They will not be forced into things they do not understand, but guided through the world, searching for their own, satisfactory solution.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is a good illustration of children's fiction. It brings together all the features we discussed earlier: the explanation for things children don't understand, for example with the Thunderbird who "create[s]

²¹ BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.*, p. 45.

storms”²²: this entry explaining a meteorological phenomenon is classic of children’s fiction. The ‘disguised’ moral is also present, as the whole book is meant to teach wizards how to take care of fantastic creatures: it contains a profound ecological message, that children will transpose into their own reality, as the author underlines in the introduction to the text: “generations of young witches and wizards have grown to a fuller knowledge and understanding of the fantastic beasts I love through the pages of this book.”²³ This quotation shows how the ‘author’ feels connected and concerned by the well-being of fantastic creatures, setting an example for the children reading or listening to it. At the same time, it offers, in miniature, a model of the process of transmission from one generation to the next, the theme to be addressed in the following and final chapter of this paper.

²² ROWLING, J.K., *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²³ *Ibid*, introduction p. 35.

3. CHILDREN'S FICTION: PARENTS AS A TARGET.

a. *THE HARRY POTTER SAGA: CHILDREN'S, YOUNG ADULT OR ADULT FICTION?*

We have explored motifs in children's fiction, and in this third and final part we will try to discuss them further through the prism of the *Harry Potter* saga, the famous series of novels, published between 1997 and 2007¹. One very simple indication on the target audience of this series is of course the age of the protagonist: Harry is 11 when he enters the school of witchcraft and wizardry of Hogwarts. This age is very important, as it is close to children's but old enough to keep them interested.

This series has a very clear black-and-white trajectory as well: Harry and his friends have to fight the 'death-eaters', who themselves obey 'the Dark Lord', aka Voldemort. Every detail is meant to show the child who is good, and who is evil.

Harry is also a representative of a special category in children's fiction: "the traditional 'last' who became 'first', the tale's marginalised orphan transformed into a hero who has the world between his hands,"² as Anne Besson describes him. This category of heroes is very important in modern children's fiction, as it enables children not only to feel empathy, but also to identify with the heroes:

¹ For the seven main novels – there have been novels and other pieces belonging to the extended universe after 2007, but here we are only talking about the seven novels that form the heart of the *Harry Potter* universe.

² BESSON, A., *op. cit.* p. 132.

they came out of nowhere, and are finally able to become whoever they want. This is a very important message during childhood, and it encourages children to believe that they also have choices to make in their lives and the opportunity to fulfil their dreams.

The wonder genre used in the *Harry Potter* saga is also important in children's fiction: children need magic, here again sometimes only to explain aspects of the world they can't understand. The *Harry Potter* different volumes all include a number of elucidations in their pages, explaining why we, 'Muggles' deprived of powers³, can't see all the magic happening around us. For example, in the fifth tome (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 2003), while Harry is heading towards a wizard's house, one of his friends uses a 'Put-Outer', that turns off all the lights in the street. He explains: "that'll take care of any Muggles looking out of the window, see?"⁴.

Still, this series of novels might for some people belong more to the genre of young adult literature. Indeed, it is full of notions that are important for teenagers: at the end of the series, Harry is 17, which corresponds more to an audience composed of teenagers. Also, the series becomes quite dark from the fourth book, *The Goblet of Fire* (2000) onwards, where Harry has to face death for the first time: the issues the protagonist faces become far more challenging from that moment on, and as Harry turns 15, everything changes. Romance, a feature most found in young adult literature, plays a bigger role in the hero's journey, and the protagonist himself is not as 'good' as he used to be: Harry has to face, since the fifth book (*The Order of the Phoenix*, 2003), a troubling ambiguity in his personality: he knows how to differentiate good and evil, but feels angry, is often aggressive and feels like there is too much pressure over him. These issues are typical of a teenager questioning, and therefore help teenagers identify with Harry, though they also recall what Bruno Bettelheim explained about children's need to deal with negative emotions.

³ 'Muggle' is the term used by wizards and witches in the *Harry Potter* saga to refer to people who have no magical abilities, who don't belong to the magical universe. Muggles are basically normal people like you and me.

⁴ ROWLING, J.K., *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Bloomsbury publishing (London, 2014), p. 54.

It has been argued that the main interest of cycles, sagas and series is that they can be followed by a person for a long time, but they often only appeal to one age group. The *Harry Potter* saga is different in the way it can suit both children and teenagers, and adults through a feeling of nostalgia.

Ultimately, there are several aspects of this series that link children's fiction and young adult styles: the wonder genre, which resonates for both these age groups, but also the very visual style of the writing: "the novels are all the subjects of movie adaptations, in a very efficient collaboration in terms of public success between the text itself and the visual dimension in the universe it unfolds."⁵ The movies have helped children and teenagers come together to share a moment, as they are both connected to Harry and moved by his adventures.

The movies, and in particular the actors who had a major role in them, also contributed to the viewers adult's afterlife as they offered role models: Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter) or Emma Watson (Hermione Granger) for example still have a major influence on their fans today, as they both are activists for major modern issues (Emma Watson is a United Nation ambassador and a feminist activist, and Daniel Radcliffe helps defend the environment with Greenpeace and supports the LGBTQ community).

The *Harry Potter* saga is a very complete series in which we follow the hero from the beginning of his adventures until the end. This is the hint that makes us understand one thing: this series is neither children's fiction, nor a young adult series. It is both: it begins in childhood, ends at the gateway to adulthood. It shares motifs from those two different literatures, and in a way, it is exactly what was supposed to happen: this series is a guide for children all through childhood and their teenage years, a comforting marker that evolves with the child. As children grow up, so does Harry, and children feel all the way more connected to him, as they live the same experiences (more or less) at the same time. The novels were published quite regularly for 10 years, evidencing the intention of the author to make Harry grow up 'normally'.

⁵ BESSON, A., *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Therefore, Harry became the friend of many children who were 9, 10 or 11 in 1997. They grew up together until becoming young adults, as the novels in turn grew darker, more serious and thus more *adult*.

b. CHILDREN'S FICTION AND NEOMEDIEVALISM: SHARED MOTIFS

We have discussed the motifs used in neomedievalism, and in children's fiction, and now will explore how they are connected, or shared.

First, it is very interesting to see that folklore is much used in both genres: in neomedievalism, it enables the writer to create a whole universe with different shades of supernatural, to take his universe out of the rational world. That is the reason why we will most often meet dragons, fairies or elves in neomedievalist novels such as the aforementioned *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, or *The Lord Of The Rings* sagas. In children's fiction, this folklore is used to give a touch of magic to the universe presented, here again to take it out of the real world: this time, it is more to help children take the story into their own universe, and claim it as their own. The *Harry Potter* universe is of course an obvious example of this, as Anne Besson has noted: "the presence of this archetypal borrowing is visible in Harry Potter, through the brewing J.K. Rowling did in the most diverse folklores and mythologies: these references now co-exist."⁶ This notion of picking up references into different folklores is obvious in this universe, with many of the creatures described in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (the unicorn p. 88, the kelpie pp. 48-49, the ghoul p. 34, etc.). These creatures are all well-known beasts from popular culture and folklore.

Neomedievalism and children's fiction are also two very visual genres: this is obviously shown by the many movies or TV series that were adapted from novels of these genres. The images and pictures are very important, which is also very visible in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

⁶ BESSON, A., *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Finally, it is quite common to find a neomedievalist story *inside* a children's fiction novel: children's stories based on princesses, princes fighting dragons or wicked witches are countless, and even though it is more childish than *The Lord Of The Rings*, it still well represents neomedievalism, albeit in a simpler form.

All these motifs and stereotypes are very often shared: a desire for magic, or at least the wish to escape reality. For adults, it is a way to escape from everyday life and its troubles, and for children, it is a way to anchor their worlds and universes, to discover their surrounding environment at their own pace, through indirect means. If magic were not that important, it would have disappeared from literature centuries ago. But the wonderful and the supernatural continue to fascinate, be it to explain the unexplainable, or to try to find some magic where there is none.

The repetition that is so important in children's fiction is also shared: in neomedievalism, there is a strong emphasis on repetitions, such as the repetition of important names that often help to simply remind them (as in *A Song Of Ice And Fire*, where the repetition of Daenerys Targaryen's full name 'Daenerys of the House Targaryen, the First of Her Name, The Unburnt, Queen of the Andals, the Rhoynar and the First Men, Queen of Meereen, Khaleesi of the Great Grass Sea, Protector of the Realm, Lady Regent of the Seven Kingdoms, Breaker of Chains and Mother of Dragons' has become a running joke among fans).

A taste for traditional folklore is the key to this trend both of neomedievalism and children's fiction based on magical creatures: folklores constitute a bank of shared references, shared notions and stories, and it is a way for authors to write about things that everyone knows. It is the best way to create a community: to give readers an element they will picture in their heads immediately, and will be able to talk about together.

From their birth children are told stories full of creatures from folklore. Depending on where they live, they will be told about snake-like dragons granting wishes (Asia), unicorns (Europe), Bigfoot (America) or mermaids (merpeople, sirens etc, all around the world). Parents know these stories, that is why they tell them, and therefore children will also know them and be influenced by them. It creates a big cycle, and thanks to this cycle folklores cross time.

Today folklore is a common cultural element between parents and children that is very important. It creates a link between them, something they can really share, because even though parents and children are not at the same level of understanding and analysis, they still share the basics: their folklore.

It is therefore very interesting to study this bond between parents' and children's reception of folklores today.

c. DUAL ADDRESS: A DEFINITION

Dual address is a concept according to which children's fiction is both written for children *and* parents. Both are targeted, because both are involved into the process of discovering, analysing and identifying to children's fiction.

Children's fiction is shared by children and parents during what Anne Besson has described as "rituals"⁷: "reading performances, always the same, are called for by children to parents as a 'ritual'."⁸ A *ritual* makes us think about a moment that is treated as sacred, not only by the child, but also by the parent him or herself. It is a very important moment in the parent-child relationship, because it is one of the very special moments that help establish the bond of trust between them, which is especially important for the child. As we argued earlier, children have a need for recognition that is very important in their early years: they need their parents to accept their vision of the world, even though they don't have the same one.

This ritual is a good moment for parents to show children they accept their vision of their environment ; moreover, children's fiction being filled with magical references and myths, it makes children open up about their point of view. The trusting relationship can be developed from the moment the parent will listen to the child's theories about the world. It is important therefore not to be "beholden to what goes on in [one's] own unconscious"⁹ while reading a story to a child: the most important will be the child's needs, in order to create that desired trust bond.

The link between dual address and fairy tales, or at least children's fiction, is outlined in Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses Of Enchantment*: "the folk fairy tale

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 121.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.* p. 151.

[...] is the result of a story being shaped and reshaped by being told millions of times, by different adults to all kinds of other adults and children.”¹⁰ Here is the DNA of a real folk tale. It changes through time, because it is told and retold, the narrator adapting the story to the audience in front of him. It is the same when a parent tells a story to his child: he will adapt details depending on the child’s reaction.

There is also a notion of simplifying the content: indeed, if the reader understands what is written, it will be far easier for the listener to understand (“The narrator’s comprehension of the tale’s many levels of meaning facilitates the child’s deriving from the story clues for understanding himself better.”¹¹).

Dual address therefore also has a commercial side: as the stories will be told by the parents, often at bedtime to create the notion of ritual, it is important that it moves parents as much as children. Parents are the ones who will buy the book, and viewed from a totally pragmatic perspective, the books have to impact them first.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is a book that will, in a way, tick all the boxes that have been explored in this research paper. Indeed, it belongs to children’s fiction, as it is full of pictures, of fantastic animals and magic. The message is not clearly displayed to the readers, even though the whole book helps understand how urgent it is to react in order to save animals in danger: this book speaks about creatures being hunted and killed no matter how few they are, which recalls the situation of actual animals such as whales or orangutans. Finally, the fantastic creatures, that mainly belong to different folklores, make the book enter into the genre of neomedievalism.

It is therefore the best example to illustrate the dual address we have evoked: as it is very short, and composed of one or two-page entries, it can very easily be ritualised. The pictures are here to make the mental representation parents and children may have of the creatures described more tangible. The myths described are either known from the parents and children, or very interesting to discover, and full of possibilities of meaning.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 150.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 155.

Finally, it is quite humoristic at the two levels: for parents, the 'knowing' introduction is very ironic, and as a 'book-within-a-book' is linked to the postmodernist notion of self-referentiality— "In 2001, a reprint of the first edition of my book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* was made available to Muggle readers,"¹² the 'author' writes. This very quick reference to the past of the saga can also be appealing for parents as it connects with their own memories of reading *Harry Potter* when they were young. For children, the different anecdotes about the creatures can be very entertaining: "TROLL [...] Notable for its equally prodigious strength and stupidity."¹³

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is not a very famous book, but it should be, as it is meaningful both for parents and children. It resonates for both age groups, in different ways, and this is very important so that both are happy to finally get to the ritual of bedtime after a long day.

This book is filled with every element that can help the child grow properly, with self-confidence and trust in their parents, but also with every element needed for the parent to feel involved in their child's evolution: with such a book, that a parent can read to their child, they can adapt, transform stories that have already been reshaped a million times. They can also show their child that their vision of the world is good: with time, this vision will get more complex and reasonable, and this book will help through this process as well.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them is composed of many different entries, just like a bestiary. Each entry presents a fantastic creature, with its physical appearance, its moral traits, and the danger it represents (or not). This possible danger, at first, will sound very black-and-white to a child: the creature is dangerous, or it is not. But with time, the child will grow up, and nuance his position, by discovering that a creature might seem dangerous, and in fact be aggressive only in return for a human being aggressive themselves. This will help the child, little by little, to understand that even though they seem strong, animals and creatures must be protected.

¹² ROWLING, J.K., *op. cit.* introduction p. 10.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 85.

CONCLUSION

The bonds between parents and children are very complex, and very fragile. It is very important to make them strong while possible: very often, this strength will come from a shared moment during childhood. Trust will appear this way, and love.

It is interesting to see that very different literary genres can share so many things: a piece of children's fiction is not that different, ultimately, from an adult neomedievalist text or a young adult novel. They all try to give messages, in a more or less direct way. In the end, they all try to teach and entertain at the same time.

But what is surprising is that children's fiction, which may seem to be the simpler of those three genres, is in fact the more complex: it is written to resonate both for children *and* adults, to fill both their needs, to be fit for both their expectations. Children's fiction books very often have several layers of reading and understanding, making them interesting to re-read as adults: one might discover a detail he never understood as a child, a recurrent motif having a certain meaning, for example the wolf from *Little Red Riding Hood* being just the representation of a malevolent man in the street.

There is no mystery as to why folklore is such an important feature in both neomedievalism and children's fiction: it is part of the culture both of parents and children, and it creates a real link between them. It might not be from the same stories, but both will know about dragons. One could say that the actual neomedievalist trend is just the need of adults to get back to childhood, but in fact it is obvious that everyone stays a child inside, even if this part of their personality is buried very deep inside.

The power of the *Harry Potter* universe, and more obviously with the example of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, is this power to bring people together. In the end, this brilliant ‘fake-true book’ works exactly the same as the whole *Harry Potter* saga: it creates a link between all generations, with shared references, and an appeal for all age groups with different layers of reading, as it is shown in this quotation we read earlier in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*: “generations of young witches and wizards have grown to a fuller knowledge and understanding of the fantastic beasts I love through the pages of this book”¹⁴: witches and wizards are no different from Muggles when it comes to bonding with the younger generation.

Finally, we will conclude on this beautiful quote by Bruno Bettelheim, that perfectly summarises the meaning of a bedtime story:

To attain to the full its consoling propensities, its symbolic meanings, and, most of all, its interpersonal meanings, a fairy tale should be told rather than read. If it is read, it ought to be read with emotional involvement in the story and in the child, with empathy for what the story may mean to him.¹⁵

And parents and children lived happily ever after.

¹⁴ ROWLING, J.K., *op. cit.*, introduction p. 35.

¹⁵ BETTELHEIM, B., *op. cit.*, p. 150.

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SEQUENCE DIDACTIQUE

SOMMAIRE

PRESENTATION DE LA SEQUENCE	58
DEROULE DE LA SEQUENCE	66
BILAN REFLEXIF	80
ANNEXES	83
BIBLIOGRAPHIE	87

PRESENTATION DE LA SEQUENCE

a. INTRODUCTION

Les créatures fantastiques, qui font partie du folklore des élèves, sont un sujet qui attire. En effet, les élèves apprécient de traiter un sujet qu'ils connaissent, qui les intéresse même pour certains. Les créatures fantastiques ont également l'intérêt non négligeable de faire partie de l'imaginaire, permettant de laisser libre cours à l'imagination des élèves, ce qui est un élément très important de ma séquence.

J'ai donc décidé de créer une séquence complète autour de la notion de folklore : les élèves pourront ainsi partir d'éléments connus, les créatures fantastiques, et nous complexifierons ensuite en emmenant les élèves dans la direction d'une étude presque anthropologique, à savoir l'étude de la notion même de folklore. Ils étudieront ainsi la définition, l'intérêt et les conséquences du folklore sur un peuple. Nous axerons la séquence sur plusieurs références de la « pop culture »¹⁶, afin de garder les élèves dans un environnement connu et de leur fournir quelques points de repères.

¹⁶ La culture populaire est l'ensemble de pratiques de la majorité d'une population à un moment donné (films, séries, littérature, mode vestimentaire, argot etc.). La culture populaire, aussi appelée « culture pop » aujourd'hui, se caractérise aujourd'hui par exemple par l'omniprésence de séries et de plateformes de visionnage, l'importance du jeu-vidéo ou encore le rap ou la trap music pour la musique.

Le plus important, pour cette séquence, sera de donner la main aux élèves et de les laisser guider la réflexion: le folklore étant construit par les peuples, il convient de laisser les élèves construire cette séquence.

b. NIVEAU ET TACHES

La discussion tournant autour des créatures fantastiques, cette séquence pourrait à l'origine se dérouler en troisième. Néanmoins, l'étude par la suite du folklore et de son intérêt anthropologique complexifie le propos de la séquence, ce qui me pousserait plutôt à l'intégrer dans une classe de seconde : le sujet de base est relativement simple donc adapté à des élèves entre 14 et 16-17 ans, mais ils ont également la maturité nécessaire pour entreprendre une étude plus aboutie sur ce sujet qu'une simple description de créatures fantastiques.

La séquence se déroulera donc au cycle 4, dans une classe de seconde, en visant un niveau B1¹⁷. Il conviendra donc d'adapter les activités afin de ne pas tomber dans la facilité, et de proposer un vocabulaire trop proche de celui du cycle 3 par exemple. L'axe « le passé dans le présent » (The past in the present) semble tout à fait adapté à l'étude des conséquences des légendes populaires sur la culture moderne.

Nous aurons donc deux tâches majeures lors de cette séquence :

- une tâche intermédiaire basée sur l'imaginaire des élèves : « You write a fantastic story to your little brother/sister. Imagine a fantastic creature you could add in your story : describe it, how it looks, its personality and abilities. Add a picture of your creature. »¹⁸.
- une tâche finale qui, cette fois, sera basée sur l'étude du folklore connu des élèves : « You participate to your high school's library poster contest : in pairs, you must create a poster based on a folklore creature that is not well known. You must describe it, explain its abilities, but also

¹⁷ Niveau CECRL (Cadre Européen Commun de Référence des Langues) attendu en seconde par le Ministère de l'Education Nationale en Langue Vivante A, que nous abrègerons désormais en LVA.

¹⁸ Voir une production réelle d'élève en annexe – annexe 1.

show in what modern artworks we can see it (literature, movies, series, paintings, video games...). You have to add pictures, screenshots etc. of your creature. ».

L'intérêt de cette tâche intermédiaire sera de montrer aux élèves que même si ils imaginent tous des créatures différentes, elles auront toutes été conditionnées par le folklore commun des élèves. Les créatures auront donc probablement toutes, ou presque, des points communs soit entre elles soit avec des créatures connues. Il sera intéressant ici de mettre en avant, dans un souci d'inclusion, les éventuels élèves allophones arrivant, ou arrivés depuis peu en France : voir qu'une culture différente permet de créer une créature différente, mais tout aussi riche représente un des atouts de cette séquence.

La tâche finale est importante d'abord pour faire découvrir aux autres élèves des créatures méconnues qui font partie de leur culture : les posters seront affichés au CDI à terme dans la mesure du possible, permettant à tous les élèves du lycée d'accéder à ces connaissances culturelles. De plus, le travail à deux permet de pallier les difficultés que peuvent rencontrer certains élèves parfois : pour mettre en place une médiation cohérente, il conviendra d'essayer de créer des binômes où, sans que l'un fasse le travail pour les deux, un élève à l'aise pourra soutenir et aider l'autre à s'améliorer. Cette aide ne venant pas vraiment de l'enseignant, cela nous permet d'éviter un éventuel sentiment de mal-être de certains élèves, qui se voient vraiment plus faibles que les autres.

Enfin, le choix de leur sujet permet aux élèves de parler d'une créature ou de séries/films/jeux vidéo qui les intéresse : la création du poster devient alors beaucoup plus attractive.

c. OBJECTIFS

Cette séquence sera basée sur différents objectifs linguistiques et culturels :

- OBJECTIF CULTUREL : L'aspect culturel de cette séquence viendra essentiellement de l'étude des différents folklores, et de la culture moderne qui en découle.
- OBJECTIF CITOYEN : Dans une moindre mesure, cette séquence pourra permettre une ouverture aux différentes cultures et au respect de ces coutumes et croyances différentes.
- OBJECTIFS LINGUISTIQUES :
 - GRAMMATICAUX : Nous aurons deux objectifs (un majeur et un mineur) : le comparatif de supériorité (**stronger than**), et le génitif (the dragon's wings). Ces objectifs sont relativement simples dans un souci d'équilibre : la séquence étant plutôt courte, on préférera des objectifs grammaticaux qui ne prennent pas trop de temps par rapport aux autres activités.
 - LEXICAUX : Le folklore (legends, myths, tale, story, imaginary...), les créatures fantastiques et leurs capacités (dragon, fly, breathe fire, fairy, mermaid, swim, fast, astounding, magnificent...).
 - PHONOLOGIQUES : On étudiera l'accent tonique, en particulier dans les mots de deux syllabes (**d**ragon, **l**egend, **m**onster).

- OBJECTIF PRAGMATIQUE : La création d'un poster qui soit lisible et attractif sera ici en jeu.
- OBJECTIF SOCIO-LINGUISTIQUE : Les posters étant, à terme, affichés au CDI, les élèves devront garder à l'esprit que leur poster s'adresse d'abord à d'autres élèves : il conviendra donc d'adapter son langage.

Les objectifs culturels et lexicaux seront ici les objectifs majeurs, même si tous les objectifs auront leur place dans cette séquence.

d. DOCUMENTS UTILISES ET ACTIVITES

Les deux tâches étant des activités d'expression écrite, il conviendra d'équilibrer la séquence en utilisant suffisamment de travail à l'oral. L'un des objectifs étant de découvrir la culture moderne autour du folklore traditionnel, il est intéressant d'utiliser des extraits de films. Nous mettrons donc en place :

- Une compréhension de l'oral basée sur un extrait du film *The Lord of the Rings : The Two Towers*¹⁹ (extrait basé sur la découverte des Ents, créatures similaires à de grands arbres);
- Une compréhension de l'écrit d'un extrait de *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*²⁰ (les entrées du bestiaire correspondant au Phoenix, au Kelpie et à la Licorne), afin d'étudier une littérature basée uniquement sur le folklore;
- Un second extrait de film avec *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows : Part II*²¹ (l'évasion de la banque Gringotts à dos de dragon), où il y a peu de dialogue mais où l'intérêt est majoritairement culturel. Ce n'est donc pas une véritable compréhension de l'oral, mais cet extrait déclenchera une expression orale en classe par la suite.

Les documents sont tous issus de la culture populaire moderne, et plusieurs autres références culturelles modernes seront cités au cours des

¹⁹ JACKSON, P. (réalisateur), *The Lord of the Rings : The Two Towers* (DVD), New Line Cinema, 2002, 179 minutes.

²⁰ ROWLING, J.K., *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, Bloomsbury Publishing (London, 2017).

²¹ YATES, D. (réalisateur), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows : Part II* (DVD), Warner Bros. Pictures, 2011, 130 minutes.

activités liées (on attendra par exemple *Game of Thrones*²², ou encore la saga *Inheritance*²³).

Nous pouvons donc nous attendre à ce que les élèves connaissent, de près ou de loin, les documents étudiés, ce qui ne représente pas de défaut majeur : en effet, leur connaissance du sujet leur donnera envie de s'investir, puisqu'ils auront l'impression de pouvoir apporter quelque chose au cours (ce qui sera évidemment le cas).

L'extrait de *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* aura une importance particulière, puisqu'il représentera un début de document modélisant pour les deux tâches de cette séquence : il conviendra donc de bien s'appliquer sur les activités autour de ce document.

²² BENIOFF, D., and WEISS, D.B. (créateurs), *Game of Thrones* (DVDs), HBO, 2011-2019.

²³ PAOLINO, C., *Inheritance*, Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 2003-2011).

DEROULE DE LA SEQUENCE

PHASE 1 : ANTICIPATION

Une bonne séquence pédagogique commence par une bonne anticipation. L'anticipation sert à donner envie aux élèves de démarrer une séquence, envie de découvrir le sujet. Il faut donc bien la préparer, et bien l'équilibrer entre les enseignements que l'on souhaite apporter aux élèves et l'aspect ludique qui permettra d'éveiller leur intérêt.

Le lexique, dans cette séquence, prend une part très importante, mais peut poser problème : en seconde, les élèves viennent de collèges différents. Il n'est donc pas rare de constater que, alors que certains élèves ont un niveau très supérieur au niveau A2/A2+ attendu en début de seconde, certains élèves au contraire ont un niveau bien en-deçà. On pourra donc essayer, grâce à des anticipations ciblées, de consolider et homogénéiser les niveaux dans une classe.

Pour cela, on pourra démarrer cette séquence avec une anticipation centrée sur le lexique.

- On commencera donc par distribuer aux élèves une fiche de vocabulaire, contenant des adjectifs rangés par groupe de sens (size, appearance, personality/abilities) et de manière logique (les adjectifs de taille par ordre croissant par exemple) afin d'en faciliter l'inférence, et des noms (fur, tail, snout, claws, teeth, etc.). Le vocabulaire augmente

en difficulté de manière croissante, permettant ainsi petit à petit de voir où s'arrêtent les connaissances des élèves.

- On organise alors un roulement de parole : chaque élève doit prononcer un mot de la case, jusqu'à arriver à la fin de la case. On veillera à être attentif à la bonne prononciation, mais surtout à la bonne accentuation du mot. On vérifie alors si certains mots ont posé un problème de compréhension ('Is there any word you don't understand ?'). Afin de mettre en place une médiation efficace, on laissera les élèves soit inférer le sens d'un mot en leur faisant deviner, soit interroger leurs camarades sur le sens de ce mot. On passe ensuite à la case suivante, et ainsi de suite.
- On projette alors un document contenant des images de créatures fantastiques²⁴ (un dragon, un troll, une licorne). Les élèves devront alors créer des phrases en utilisant à tour de rôle un mot de chaque case. Les mots utilisés devront être différents d'une créature à l'autre. On insistera afin que les élèves complexifient leurs énoncés ('It is beautiful. – Can you make it more complex ? –A dragon is a huge creature, the most impressive thing about its body are its wings. I love this creature because I find it fascinating on account of its strength²⁵.'). A mesure que les élèves décrivent les créatures, on écrit leurs réponses en miroir avec les créatures. On n'oublie pas de demander aux élèves quel est le nom de la créature. On crée ainsi une trace écrite, que les élèves pourront noter sur une fiche que nous leur distribuons, contenant les images et une zone de pointillés en miroir afin d'avoir la description correspondante en face de chaque créature. On n'oublie pas de mettre le vocabulaire nouveau en vert.
- On peut alors mettre en place une activité de phonologie : de retour sur la fiche de lexique, on demande aux élèves de trouver les mots contenant deux syllabes et de les entourer. On désigne ensuite un *board manager* (élève responsable du tableau), qui interrogera lui-même ses camarades afin d'écrire au tableau les réponses de l'exercice. On obtient alors une liste de mots de deux syllabes. On peut alors changer

²⁴ Voir les images projetées en annexe – annexe 2.

²⁵ Enoncé issu d'une production d'élève.

de *board manager*, et demander au nouvel élu de souligner les syllabes accentuées. Au besoin et sur demande uniquement, on pourra faire prononcer un mot problématique par un élève, afin que le *board manager* l'entende. On veillera alors à la bonne prononciation du mot par l'ensemble de la classe, en mettant en place une répétition chorale.

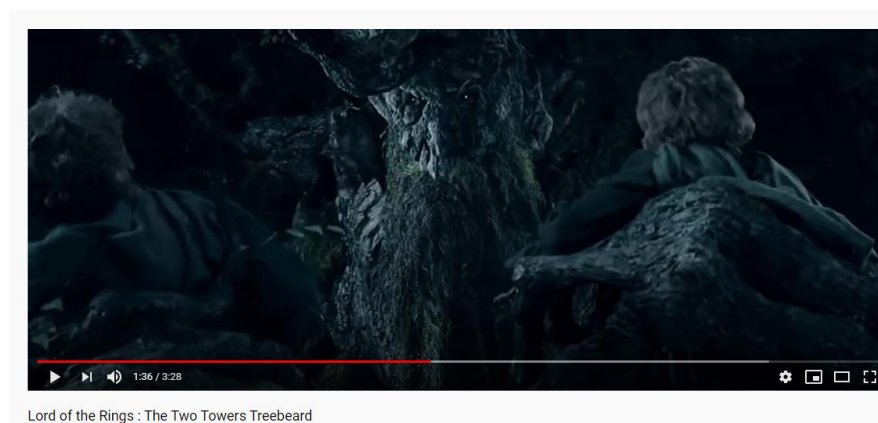
- On pourra alors écrire au tableau un des mots de l'exercice précédent en écriture phonétique, en demandant ensuite aux élèves (en français, puisqu'il s'agit ici d'un exercice de phonologie) quel élément leur permet de voir quelle syllabe est accentuée : ils remarqueront très vite l'apostrophe, et on pourra alors noter dans le cahier le mot en écriture phonétique ainsi qu'une phrase en français : « en écriture phonétique, on met une apostrophe devant la syllabe accentuée. On remarque qu'en général, on accentue la première syllabe dans les mots de deux syllabes. ». Au long de la séquence, on pourra demander la prononciation et l'écriture phonétique de mots de deux syllabes afin d'ancrer cette notion phonologique.
- Pour poursuivre l'anticipation, on demandera aux élèves d'expliquer, avec leurs mots, pourquoi ils connaissent le dragon, le troll et la licorne ('How come you know these creatures ?'). Les élèves expliqueront alors que cela fait partie de leur culture, de leurs légendes, peut-être que leurs familles leur en ont parlé, etc. On pourra alors écrire 'folklore' au tableau, en leur demandant leur définition de ce mot. Ils comprendront vite le lien, et très vite ressortira l'idée que ces créatures font partie du folklore. On pourra alors noter dans le cahier la définition du folklore, puis le titre et l'axe correspondant à cette notion (The past in the present – Folklore and fantastic creatures).

PHASE 2 : COMPREHENSIONS DE DOCUMENTS

Cette partie de la séquence se déroulera donc en trois temps : une première compréhension orale, suivie d'une compréhension écrite, et enfin une étude cinématographique d'un extrait de film ne comprenant presque pas de dialogue pour approfondir la réflexion.

- COMPREHENSION DE L'ORAL

Il s'agit d'un extrait du film *The Two Towers*, appartenant à la trilogie originelle *The Lord of the Rings*. Dans cet extrait, Merry et Pippin, deux hobbits, se trouvent confrontés à un Ent, créature mythique de cet univers, ressemblant fortement à un très grand arbre. La créature explique aux jeunes hobbits qu'il n'est du côté de personne dans la guerre en cours, et qu'il ne cherche qu'à protéger la forêt. Les Ents ont été créés par J. R. R. Tolkien, auteur des romans *The Lord of the Rings*, mais ces créatures sont devenues tellement populaires qu'elles font aujourd'hui partie de la culture populaire.



Capture d'écran de l'extrait montré en classe.

Ce document interviendra donc à la suite de l'activité d'anticipation. L'activité se déroulera comme suit :

- On écrit au tableau 'The Lord of the Rings', en demandant aux élèves ce que cela leur rappelle ('What does it remind you of?'). Quelques élèves demanderont probablement du vocabulaire, qu'on pourra leur donner soit en leur faisant inférer le sens soit en demandant l'aide de la classe ('Can anybody help?'). On obtiendra au final un titre traduit si personne n'a compris le lien jusqu'ici, et le titre étant calqué en français, les élèves comprendront au final le thème du jour. On pourra alors leur annoncer que la compréhension du jour est un extrait du film *The Two Towers*. En fin d'anticipation du document, on demandera aux élèves d'imaginer les créatures qu'ils s'attendent à voir, d'après leur connaissance du film ou leur imagination. On s'attend à des idées comme *elves* (un bon moyen de voir le pluriel irrégulier de *elf*), *dragons*, *orcs*, *hobbits*, *dwarfs*, etc. Les hypothèses sont notées au tableau.
- Les élèves reçoivent une *worksheet*, que nous lisons ensemble afin de vérifier que les questions sont comprises.
- La vidéo est ensuite diffusée une première fois, avec pour consigne de ne répondre qu'aux deux premières questions (questions de compréhension globale) : 'vrai ou faux' pour comprendre qui est la créature, et recherche du nom de la créature en complétant la citation 'I am an...'. Ces deux questions font l'objet d'une mise en commun. Tout le monde est donc au même niveau de compréhension pour la suite.
- On montre de nouveau la vidéo, en demandant cette fois aux élèves de répondre à la question 3 : la question porte sur le sens du surnom de la créature ('tree herder, shepherd of the forest') : on donne aux élèves la définition de *herd* et *shepherd*. Les élèves ont donc quelques minutes pour expliquer, avec leurs mots, en quoi le Ent est le berger de la forêt. On attend des réponses telles que 'He is the protector of the forest, like a shepherd with his sheep'. Ces réponses mises en commun à l'oral créent une trace écrite que les élèves peuvent prendre en note dans leur cahier.
-

I AM AN ...

WORKSHEET

1. TRUE OR FALSE – Justify your answers with the video.

THE BIG CREATURE IS A TREE. TRUE / FALSE

THE BIG CREATURE IS ON THE HOBBIT'S SIDE. TRUE / FALSE

2. TRY TO FIND THE NAME OF THE CREATURE: "I AM AN"

3. MERRY TALKS ABOUT THE CREATURE IN THOSE WORDS:

"A TREE HERDER! A SHEPERD OF THE FOREST!"

A HERD : un troupeau.
A SHEPERD : Un berger.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS, TRY TO EXPLAIN WHY THE CREATURE IS NICKNAMED A "TREE HERDER" AND A "SHEPERD".

.....

4. BASED ON THE VIDEO, HIGHLIGHT THE ADJECTIVES THAT DESCRIBE THE CREATURE BEST.

STUPID	DANGEROUS	IMPRESSIVE	BEAUTIFUL
	BENEVOLENT	WISE	OLD
YOUNG	INTELLIGENT	UGLY	SCARY
	HUGE	SMALL	AGGRESSIVE
MONSTROUS	KIND	STRONG	

Worksheet correspondant à l'activité de compréhension orale.

- Les élèves ont ensuite quelques minutes pour effectuer le dernier exercice de la *worksheet*: parmi des adjectifs donnés, ils doivent surligner ceux qui correspondent au Ent. Cet exercice permettra de donner de la matière aux élèves pour que, à l'oral, ils puissent décrire cette créature en la comparant à d'autres : on les pousse ainsi à essayer de former des comparatifs de supériorité ('he is bigger than a fairy, but the dragon is even bigger. He is wiser than a troll.'), que l'on marque en rouge dans la trace écrite.
- On peut enfin faire un point culturel sur le roman à l'origine du film et son auteur, J.R.R. Tolkien. On demande alors 'Do you think the author invented the Ents ?' : les élèves répondront probablement que non, que ces créatures font partie du folklore. On pourra alors les surprendre en leur apprenant que non, et que c'est seulement la popularité de ces créatures inventées par J.R.R. Tolkien qui les a fait entrer dans le

folklore moderne. On note ces informations dans une trace écrite, que les élèves forment en récapitulant ce que nous avons dit.

- Cette trace écrite nous permet de mettre en place une PRL²⁶ sur le comparatif de supériorité, que nous pourrons dès lors réviser tout au long de la séquence, jusqu'au devoir sur table et jusqu'à la tâche finale.

- COMPREHENSION DE L'ECRIT

Il s'agit ici de trois très courts extraits du livre *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Here is the document you must use to complete the worksheet "fantastic beasts". The text and pictures are taken from the novel *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, by J.K. Rowling.

KELPIE

This British and Irish water demon can take various shapes, though it most often appears as a horse with bulrushes for a mane. Having lured the unwary on to its back, it will dive straight to the bottom of its river or lake and devour the rider, letting the entrails float to the surface.

VOCABULARY BOX :

Shape : forme
Bulrushes : juncs, plante de bord d'eau ressemblant à de hautes herbes
Unwary : imprudent



Exemple de document correspondant à l'activité de compréhension écrite : *The Kelpie*.

Cet ouvrage, basé sur l'univers de la saga *Harry Potter*, expose les créatures peuplant cet univers en un bestiaire très complet et illustré. Les extraits tirés de cet ouvrage sont trois entrées de ce bestiaire : le kelpie, créature légendaire irlandaise, le phénix et la licorne. Ces trois entrées sont composées d'une indication sur le lieu de vie de la créature, de sa description physique, de ses capacités spéciales et enfin d'une mention sur son agressivité éventuelle. Les trois entrées sont illustrées.

- La première étape de cette activité consiste à séparer la classe en groupes : on doit obtenir un nombre de groupes qui soit un multiple de trois, afin qu'il y ait pour chaque créature étudiée le même nombre de

²⁶ PRL : Pratique Raisonnée de la Langue. Exercice de grammaire court, généralement pratiqué en français, où l'enseignant.e amène les élèves à réfléchir eux-mêmes sur une forme grammaticale, afin que la solution vienne d'eux.

groupes. Des groupes de 4 élèves au maximum seraient le plus adapté, afin que chacun puisse s'exprimer et être entendu. Cette séparation de la classe permet la mise en place d'une différenciation : on peut distribuer aux groupes les plus en difficulté l'extrait sur la licorne, aux groupes intermédiaires l'extrait concernant le phénix, et enfin donner aux groupes les plus à l'aise l'extrait sur le Kelpie.

- On distribue alors à chaque groupe une fiche sur laquelle est dessiné un tableau : il existe une colonne pour chaque créature, mais les élèves ne doivent remplir qu'une colonne avec les informations de leur propre extrait. On demande donc le nom de la créature, son milieu de vie, une caractéristique physique, une capacité spéciale, et enfin on demande si la créature est dangereuse ou non.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

WORKSHEET

NATURE OF THE DOCUMENT :

CIRCLE THE CORRECT SENTENCE :

- a. THIS DOCUMENT IS FICTION. b. THIS DOCUMENT IS ABOUT REALITY.

COMPLETE ONE COLUMN OF THIS CHART WITH INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CREATURE.

GROUP	A	B	C
NAME OF THE CREATURE			
WHERE IN THE WORLD CAN WE FIND IT ?			
DOES IT LIVE IN THE AIR, IN WATER OR ON EARTH ?			
(PRINCIPAL) FORM / APPEARANCE			
ONE MAJOR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC			
IS IT GOOD OR BAD ?			

COMPLETE THE CHART WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE OTHER GROUPS' CREATURES.

Worksheet correspondant à l'activité de compréhension écrite.

- Une fois la partie recherche terminée, on met les réponses en commun : un *group speaker* est désigné afin de donner les informations récoltées, tandis que les élèves des autres groupes prennent des notes. On met

ainsi en place une médiation totale, puisque l'enseignant.e peut alors totalement s'effacer.

- On peut ensuite distribuer aux élèves les extraits concernant les créatures qu'ils n'ont pas étudiées, afin qu'ils gardent une trace. On leur demande alors si ces créatures ont été inventées par l'auteur. Ils doivent pour répondre essayer de réfléchir de manière logique : on n'attend pas forcément la bonne réponse, simplement le cheminement mental pour y parvenir. On écrit une phrase dans le cahier, reprenant alors la réponse et son explication : 'These creatures were not invented by the author : they are part of folklore, they are legends that existed before.'
- On pourra alors mettre en place une PRL très courte sur le génitif (objectif mineur) : on demande aux élèves, en français, de relever dans les trois extraits les 'of' marquant la possession. On leur demande ensuite si ces 'of' n'auraient pas pu être formulés autrement, pour former des phrases plus courtes et/ou simples. Après étude de cette nouvelle forme, on en écrit la règle en français dans le cahier.

- ACTIVITE VISUELLE SUR EXTRAIT DE FILM

Ce dernier document est un extrait du film *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows : Part II*. Il s'agit de la scène d'évasion de la banque Gringotts : Harry, Ron et Hermione, les trois protagonistes, s'échappent d'une banque souterraine sur le dos d'un dragon qui n'a jamais vu la lumière du jour. Le dragon est maigre, très pale, blessé : il semble malade.



Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 2 (Dragon Flight Scene - HD)

Capture d'écran de l'extrait diffusé en classe.

- On anticipera donc cet extrait en demandant d'abord quel était l'art représenté dans le document précédent : on obtient le mot *literature*. On peut alors demander aux élèves de réfléchir à d'autres formes d'art dans lesquelles on trouve la présence du folklore ('Where can you find folklore creatures, apart from literature ?') : très vite, les élèves parleront de films ou de séries, et on pourra alors créer une activité ludique. On demande aux élèves quelques exemples de films ou de séries mettant en scène des créatures folkloriques. On obtient une liste (par exemple : *Game Of Thrones*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Eragon*, *Vampire Diaries*, *Teen Wolf*). On effectue alors deux sondages : un premier, en rouge, pour noter qui connaît les séries ou films cités, et l'autre, en vert, pour noter qui les regarde ou ont regardés. Grâce à ce sondage, on peut faire prendre conscience aux élèves que le folklore n'a pas forcément l'air vieux, mais peut aussi composer des œuvres très modernes et tout à fait actuelles.
- On distribue alors une *worksheet*, et on diffuse une première fois la vidéo, en demandant aux élèves de se concentrer sur la première question ('Which creatures did you recognize ?') : les élèves auront trouvé le dragon, et la plupart auront également trouvé les gobelins. On met cette réponse en commun, afin de clarifier la deuxième, qui se concentre sur le dragon.

CREATURES FROM HARRY POTTER

WORKSHEET

1. WHAT CREATURES DID YOU RECOGNIZE IN THE VIDEO?

.....

2. FOCUS ON THE HUGE CREATURE: WHAT CHARACTERISTICS MADE YOU RECOGNIZE IT?

.....

WHEN A CREATURE IS ALWAYS REPRESENTED WITH A SPECIAL ELEMENT, THIS ELEMENT IS CALLED A "..... CHARACTERISTIC".

Worksheet correspondant à la deuxième activité de compréhension orale.

- On demande alors aux élèves de répondre à la deuxième question de la *worksheet* : une liste des caractéristiques qui ont aidé les élèves à reconnaître le dragon. On met cette liste en commun, et on commence une réflexion avec les élèves, pour les amener à comprendre que les caractéristiques communes font qu'une créature entre dans le folklore : tout le monde dans une certaine zone du monde connaît cette créature sous une certaine forme. On peut alors introduire le terme de *generic characteristic* : une caractéristique commune et récurrente pour toutes les différentes apparitions d'une créature.
- On peut alors distribuer un jeu de *matching* : les élèves ont différentes images de dragons, qu'ils doivent relier à différentes époques et régions du monde. Cet exercice permet de comprendre qu'une créature peut avoir des différences avec le temps ou selon la région de la planète, mais au final l'idée de la créature reste la même.

CHOOSE AND WRITE UNDER EACH DRAGON'S REPRESENTATION THE PLACE AND PERIOD IT COMES FROM (IN YOUR OPINION).

PLACES: EUROPE - ASIA - EGYPT - SCANDINAVIA

PERIODS: MIDDLE AGES - MODERN TIME - PRE HISTORICAL TIMES



.....



.....



.....



.....



.....

Jeu de *matching*.

A l'issue de ces trois compréhensions de documents, les élèves ont un bagage conséquent sur le folklore : ils en comprennent l'origine, ainsi que les conséquences sur la culture populaire moderne. Ils en comprennent également l'influence sur leur propre vie.

PHASE 3 : EVALUATION(s)

L'évaluation de cette séquence se déroulera en trois temps :

- D'abord, les élèves auront un devoir sur table à faire, contenant des exercices de grammaire et de vocabulaire. Ce sera un devoir de trente minutes, une évaluation formative qui donnera lieu par la suite à une remédiation sur les points grammaticaux et lexicaux qui posent problème, tout ceci afin de préparer les élèves au mieux à leur tâche finale, où ils devront utiliser le vocabulaire et les points de grammaire vus en classe.
- La tâche intermédiaire interviendra après le devoir sur table : elle sera à composer en classe, afin d'éviter d'avantager les élèves qui pourraient avoir un soutien supplémentaire ou une aide quelconque à la maison. L'objectif est de créer soi-même, sans aide et en n'utilisant que ses connaissances. Ce ne sera pas pour autant un devoir au sens strict, puisque les élèves auront accès aux dictionnaires si besoin ainsi qu'à l'aide de l'enseignant.e. Ils pourront également, pour la phase de dessin/illustration, s'inspirer d'œuvres existantes, en utilisant par exemple le site deviantart.com²⁷ dont ils auront découvert quelques œuvres lors de l'anticipation. Il conviendra néanmoins de bien surveiller les élèves utilisant internet pour éviter les écarts²⁸.
- La tâche finale constituera la seule véritable évaluation sommative de la séquence : elle représentera l'aboutissement de cette séquence, sur un projet complet mené par les élèves, de la conception à la création de leur poster en lui-même. Les bases et la conception seront réalisés en

²⁷ Deviantart.com est une plateforme participative autour des arts en général, contenant des milliers d'œuvres de tous styles et toutes techniques créées et postées librement sur le site, sous droits d'auteurs.

²⁸ Voir le barème pour l'évaluation en annexe – annexe 3.

classe, ainsi que la fourniture du matériel (feuilles A3), et la création du poster sera terminée à la maison, en autonomie (bien que l'enseignant.e reste à disposition pour répondre aux interrogations et problèmes éventuels). Le retour en classe des projets se fera pour procéder à un vote : la classe devra élire le poster le mieux réussi. Les posters partiront ensuite au CDI pour être exposés, le poster gagnant au centre de l'exposition²⁹.

²⁹ Voir le barème pour l'évaluation en annexe – annexe 4.

BILAN REFLEXIF

Il paraît clair qu'on est plus intéressant lorsque l'on est intéressé : cette règle est la même pour le métier d'enseignant. Un.e enseignant.e captera toujours mieux l'attention des élèves en parlant d'un sujet qui l'intéresse personnellement, et c'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de créer cette séquence.

Tout son attrait repose sur son côté ludique, qu'il ne faut donc surtout pas négliger. Cette séquence ne peut-être une véritable réussite que si elle est menée avec des élèves intéressés par le sujet et dynamiques, en demande d'apprendre. Si les élèves sont plutôt passifs, ils ne se sentiront pas impactés par cette séquence, qui se veut *la séquence des élèves*, une séquence qu'ils contrôlent et peuvent faire évoluer.

Il serait donc intelligent de ne pas proposer cette séquence dès le début d'année, mais plutôt de la garder pour le deuxième trimestre, et ce pour plusieurs raisons :

- une attente permettra à l'enseignant.e de mieux connaître ses élèves et de s'assurer de leur implication et de leur motivation face à ce type de séquence;
- une séquence plus ludique permet, par exemple, de redémarrer l'apprentissage après les vacances de Noël qui, souvent, font chuter la motivation des élèves;
- cette séquence peut intervenir en suite d'une séquence plus longue et fastidieuse éventuellement, afin de remotiver les élèves qui auraient pu se lasser.

Enfin, la séquence reposant sur ce que les élèves proposent, il serait judicieux d'essayer de profiter de cette occasion pour montrer aux élèves les moins à l'aise que l'environnement de la classe est sécurisé pour eux, et qu'ils peuvent se permettre de s'ouvrir sans avoir peur de l'erreur, qui représente encore aujourd'hui un trop gros frein pour les élèves en difficulté : ils ne peuvent pas se tromper quand il s'agit de l'imaginaire collectif, il n'y a pas de mauvaise réponse.

J'ai personnellement eu l'occasion de mettre en place cette séquence au cours du deuxième trimestre, peu après le retour des vacances de février 2020. Malheureusement, cette séquence ainsi que toute la vie au lycée s'est vue impactée par un évènement inattendu : l'épidémie du Covid-19.

Il a donc fallu, en urgence, proposer aux élèves un système alternatif pour qu'ils puissent continuer à progresser. Ainsi, nous nous sommes doucement organisés autour d'une envie commune : poursuivre cette séquence, en promouvant l'autonomie des élèves. Après quelques adaptations sur les documents, j'ai mis en place un calendrier spécifique de dépôt et de rendu pour chaque document : les élèves pouvaient alors s'organiser comme ils le souhaitent pour rendre le travail en temps et en heure.

Cette épidémie aura eu, malgré toutes les inquiétudes et les craintes qu'elle a soulevées, le mérite de prouver qu'une séquence qui intéresse les élèves, dont le sujet leur parle, leur donnera toujours envie de s'investir. Tous les documents m'ont été rendus, à l'heure, et les élèves m'ont presque tous signalé le plaisir qu'ils avaient pris à travailler sur ce sujet. L'imaginaire est extrêmement important en cette période de confinement, et cette séquence leur a, d'après eux, permis de s'évader.

Cette séquence n'est pas parfaite : le niveau, pour une classe de seconde, pourrait être plus exigeant. Les objectifs, tant lexicaux que grammaticaux, pourraient se complexifier sans entraîner de difficulté du point de vue des élèves.

En somme, cette séquence n'est pour l'instant pas assez équilibrée entre les connaissances acquises et l'aspect ludique, qui reste prépondérant (parfois trop).

Néanmoins cette séquence aura été, malgré les circonstances, un véritable succès. Les élèves ont eu l'air d'apprécier le thème, ce qui leur a permis d'apprendre et de retenir du vocabulaire, des points de grammaire et de phonologie, mais également des concepts culturels, parfois sans s'en rendre compte. Le sujet leur a semblé accessible, en particulier parce qu'il était connu : il a donc été possible d'évoquer des notions et des aspects techniques de ce sujet, comme le concept de « generic characteristic » en littérature et au cinéma, et de les faire découvrir aux élèves malgré leur apparente difficulté et technicité.

Cette séquence, survenue pendant la période de confinement, mériterait néanmoins d'être effectuée en classe. Les circonstances m'ont empêchée de mettre en places certaines activités ludiques et/ou en groupes, qui permettent de créer une cohésion au sein de la classe. De plus, les conditions n'étaient pas idéales pour permettre aux élèves de travailler de manière équitable (matériel, situation sociale/financière/familiale).

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1 : PRODUCTION D'ELEVE AUTHENTIQUE (TACHE INTERMEDIAIRE – AVRIL 2020) – NON MODIFIEE, NI CORRIGEE.

As a fantastic creature, I imagined a winter fairy. This creature is a mixture of fairy and elf. She is rather small, and her skin is white. She has big pointed ears, she also has long blue hair. Her fingers are quite pointed. Her wings are giant, they are both purple and blue. She has white teeth and a breast hidden by her dress. You could say that she has the reduced body of a human. She wears jewellery; bottle-shaped and a necklace on her forehead. Her dress is made up of a bustier and a skirt cut into serpentine. Her dress is blue and purple too, she is shiny and contains diamonds. She has high boots that stick to her skin.

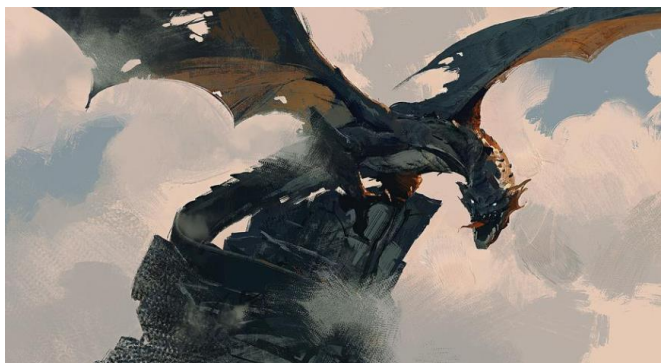
This creature is fascinating and surprising. She mainly moves by flying but she can walk, she is intelligent. Even though it is small, it is very fast.

She lives in the trees, in the midst of snowflakes. She lives especially in winter as in summer, she can't stand the heat. It can transform snow into ice, it can move snow. She fights her enemies by freezing them from head to the feet. She can also build objects made entirely of ice. She is a magnificent fairy because she manages to control winter nature. She is a very positive creature; she has a good background and fights against the forces of evil.

I chose to compare the chimera with my imaginary creature because these two creatures prefer to live in winter. The chimera has white hair compared to my winter fairy. The eyes of the two imaginary creatures are cold; but the chimera is the more furious of the two. These two creatures live in the forest; the chimera still prefers to live in the dark while the fairy-elf prefers the snow therefore the clear. Their character traits are quite different; the chimera is majestic but it is cruel, it's a bad being because it is one of the enemies of the fairy-elf.

The fairy looks more like a human while the chimera can be confused with a wolf or a dog so it looks like an animal.

ANNEXE 2 : IMAGES UTILISEES LORS DE L'ANTICIPATION



DRAGON



UNICORN



TROLL

ANNEXE 3 : BAREME D'EVALUATION (tâche intermédiaire)

A1	A2	B1
VOCABULAIRE : Tu peux utiliser un vocabulaire de base, tu as recours à des répétitions.	Tu peux utiliser un vocabulaire plus riche sur des sujets que tu connais.	Tu peux utiliser un vocabulaire étendu sur des sujets que tu ne connais pas forcément.
1 POINT	2-3 POINT	4 POINTS
GRAMMAIRE : Tu peux t'exprimer de manière très basique, et tu fais des erreurs récurrentes.	Tu peux t'exprimer en faisant moins d'erreurs, et ton niveau général en langue est correct.	Tu peux t'exprimer en faisant très peu d'erreurs de langue.
1-2 POINTS	3-4 POINTS	5-6 POINTS
COMPREHENSION : Tu peux faire des phrases très simples et il est parfois difficile de te comprendre.	Tu peux t'exprimer de manière simple, mais on te comprend bien dans la globalité.	Tu peux t'exprimer en utilisant des structures complexes, et on te comprend très bien.
1-2 POINTS	3-4 POINTS	5-6 POINTS
CREATIVITE : Tu peux réutiliser des éléments vus en classe pour inventer une créature très similaire à celles étudiées.	Tu peux créer une créature simple mais différente de celles étudiées en classe.	Tu peux créer une créature originale aux compétences et caractéristiques complexes.
1 POINT	2-3 POINTS	4 POINTS

ANNEXE 4 : BAREME D'EVALUATION (tâche finale)

A1	A2	B1
RICHESSE DE LA LANGUE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte intelligible en utilisant un lexique très simple / pauvre sur un sujet connu ou non. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte en utilisant un répertoire lexical simple mais limité même sur un sujet moins bien connu. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte en utilisant un répertoire lexical assez étendu / varié même sur un sujet que tu connais peu.
1 - 2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS
CORRECTION DE LA LANGUE ECRITE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte globalement compréhensible mais des erreurs récurrentes même sur des structures simples et courantes rendent la lecture peu aisée 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte immédiatement compréhensible malgré des erreurs fréquentes sur des structures courantes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte clair • Les erreurs sur les structures simples et complexes ne gênent pas la lecture
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 - 4 POINTS
COHERENCE DE LA CONSTRUCTION DU DISCOURS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte simple de type énumération • Tu utilises peu de connecteurs logiques créant parfois peu de lien entre les idées 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte en utilisant des structures plus complexes • Tu utilises des connecteurs élémentaires et courants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux produire un texte en utilisant des formulations simples et complexes variées • Tu indiques clairement la relation entre les idées dans un texte structuré et logique
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
CREATIVITE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux créer un poster très classique, à propos d'une créature très connue ou non. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux intégrer des éléments plus originaux dans ton poster • Tu as choisi une créature moins connue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ton poster est très original • Tu as choisi une créature méconnue pour la faire découvrir à tes camarades.
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
INVESTISSEMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu ne t'investis pas beaucoup dans ton groupe, tu te reposes sur ton partenaire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu t'investis dans ton groupe, mais tu laisses ton partenaire prendre la plupart des décisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vous travaillez ensemble, pour créer un poster qui vous convient et qui représente votre travail à tous les deux.
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
RECHERCHE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux traiter le sujet avec des informations basiques sur une créature. • Contenu simple / court en lien avec le sujet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux traiter le sujet avec des informations basiques ET des éléments méconnus sur une créature. • Contenu informatif relativement développé 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tu peux apporter beaucoup de renseignements méconnus sur une créature. • Contenu informatif détaillé et assez efficace
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS

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Children's fiction is a literary genre in its own right, and very often it doesn't get the light it deserves. Often considered inferior, like young adult fiction, it is in fact filled with specific characteristics and generic elements that are meaningful for the emotional and social development of children.

Literature belonging to the genre of neomedievalism has been similarly misunderstood: described by many scholars as a low-brow genre, it has nevertheless succeeded in conquering the heart of many readers, and expanded into a variety of different mediums, such as movies, TV shows or even music.

The book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, by J.K. Rowling, will be the heart of our research process, as it is the best example, along with the whole *Harry Potter* saga, to make a point here.

By showing the links one can find between children's fiction and adult neomedievalism, this research paper intends to prove that these literary genres are not inferior, but rather constitute complex, unique and essential genres both for children's progress and adult's well-being and knowledge of their offspring.

Key-words: Literature, children's fiction, *Harry Potter*, neomedievalism, postmodernism, dual address.