

## CHAPTER NINE<sup>1</sup>

### IN SEARCH OF THE “IMAGINATIVE GOLDEN AGE IN TIME OR SPACE”:

### NARRATIVE FORM IN *TANGLEWRECK*, *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE*, AND *THE GOLDEN COMPASS*

VALERIE KENNEDY

#### Introduction

Like J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*<sup>2</sup> and Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*, Jeanette Winterson's *Tanglewreck* can be seen as a modified versions of the romance narrative. All three books present a quest, undertaken by an orphaned (or apparently orphaned) protagonist, where the action takes the form of a journey and a series of adventures, culminating in a conflict and its resolution, and representing the struggle between good and evil. All the protagonists have friend(s) or helper(s), human or otherwise, who aid them in the quest. The quest takes different forms. In *Harry Potter*, it is the struggle against the power and ambitions of Voldemort; in *The Golden Compass*, it is the quest to discover the truth about Dust (and to rescue the captured children and Lord Asriel); in *Tanglewreck* it is the search for the Timekeeper. In all three books the quest also has cosmic dimensions, and involves no less than the salvation of the protagonists' worlds. In *Harry Potter* both the

---

<sup>1</sup> The following editions of Winterson's works are used in this chapter: *The Passion*. 1988. London: Penguin. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. 1990. London, Sydney, Wellington: Pandora Press. *Sexing the Cherry*. 1991. New York: Vintage International. *Boating for Beginners*. 1999. London: Vintage. *Gut Symmetries*. 1999. London: Granta Books.

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Harry Potter*.

Muggles' and the magicians' worlds must be protected against the evil power of Voldemort; in *The Golden Compass* the potential salvation or destruction of Lyra's world and the other worlds in the universe is involved, and in *Tanglewreck* the Timekeeper has the power to set things right in Silver's world and other worlds too.

While these features are to be found in many fairy tales and folk tales,<sup>3</sup> as well as in many children's novels, they are also those of the romance narrative, according to Northrop Frye's "anatomy" in *Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye argues that the "essential element of plot in romance is adventure" (186); the romance consists of "a sequence of minor adventures leading up to a major or climacteric adventure": "the quest" (186-87). If the quest is successfully completed, it has three main stages: "the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures", "the crucial struggle" between the hero and his antagonist, during which one or both may die, and "the exaltation of the hero" (187).<sup>4</sup> Frye sees the romance as focused on "the conflict between the hero and his enemy", so that its "central form . . . is dialectical" (187). The conflict takes place in "our world" although the protagonist and antagonist may have divine or satanic attributes respectively. A final feature is nostalgia: "the perennially child-like quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space" (186). However, there is one major difference between Frye's "anatomy" of romance and the novels by Winterson, Rowling, and Pullman. While Frye says that the conflict of romance "takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world" (187), the three novels I am concerned with shift between "our world" and at least one other: *Tanglewreck* moves from Silver's world to the Einstein Line and the Sands of Time as well as backwards in time to the sixteenth century and ancient Egypt, Harry Potter moves from the world of Muggles to that of wizards, and *The Golden Compass* ends with a move to the world of the city in the sky. The "other worlds" of the three novels reflect human concerns and relate back to "our world", but they are all either fantastic or science-fictional in various ways, especially in *Tanglewreck*, which moves between different times or different views of time as well as between different worlds.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Vladimir Propp's *Morphologie du conte* for a structural analysis of the fairy tale.

<sup>4</sup> Somewhat confusingly, Frye later identifies four stages of "the quest-myth": the conflict between the hero and his antagonist, death, the disappearance of the hero, and the reappearance and recognition of the hero (192). Here I shall be referring to the tripartite structure he uses in relation to romance.

In this essay I shall examine *Tanglewreck*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Golden Compass* as modified examples of romance narrative. I shall analyse the authors' use of the figure of the orphan protagonist and the quest form of journey, conflict, and resolution, and the struggle between the protagonist and the antagonist, (or between good and evil), touching on the role of the helpers, and the special relationship between the protagonist and the magic object at the heart of the quest. The different worlds of the novels in space and time will also be discussed. Finally, I shall consider Frye's assertion that romance is characterized by nostalgia and the search for an “imaginative golden age in time or space” (186), specifically linking the idea of nostalgia to Freud's concept of “family romances”.

### **Narrative Technique: Time Shifts in *Tanglewreck***

In terms of narrative perspective and point of view, both *Harry Potter* and *The Golden Compass* are purely third-person narratives, and each focuses the narrative entirely on the protagonist.<sup>5</sup> This allows the reader to identify and empathize more intensely with Harry and Lyra, since she sees events and characters from the protagonist's point of view. In contrast, in *Tanglewreck* the narrative switches initially between third person and first-person narratives, with Silver as the first person narrator (22-24 and see 27). This is short-lived, although there are occasional excursions into some of the characters' memories: Silver remembers her father talking about the Timekeeper (83-84), Pope Gregory XIII remembers Maria Prophetess (223, 226-33), and Micah (116-18) remembers the eighteenth century Bethlehem Hospital (or Bedlam). The narrative also shifts between Silver's adventures and Thugger and Fisty's farcical search of Tanglewreck and their meeting with Sir Roger Rover, and then between these and the narration of Mrs. Rokabye and Sniveller's adventures, with all the narrative threads coming together in the final chapter.<sup>6</sup> Although such narrative shifts in time, place, and point of view are very effective in novels like *The Passion*, *Sexing the Cherry*, and *Lighthousekeeping*, the

---

<sup>5</sup> This changes in the second and third volumes of Pullman's trilogy, especially in the third, where the narrative is divided between Lyra, Will (and then Will and Lyra), Lord Asriel, and Mary Malone, to name only the most important, all in different worlds.

<sup>6</sup> Thugger and Fisty's adventures are recounted in chapters six, eight, ten, seventeen, twenty-five, and thirty-two, those of Mrs. Rokabye and Sniveller in chapters twenty-eight and thirty-one.

technique seems less successful here, since it breaks the tension and lessens the suspense created by Silver's adventures. For example, at the end of chapter sixteen, Gabriel declares: "The Council is done", meaning that Silver's fate has been decided, although we do not yet know how (180). The narrative then turns to the comedy of Thugger and Fisty in eighteen, before returning to Silver in nineteen, which begins: "It was a grim night in the Chamber" (189).<sup>7</sup> Along with the frequent flashbacks and changes of place, these narrative shifts move the spotlight off Silver and make *Tanglewreck* a more fragmented and therefore more diluted form of romance narrative than either *Harry Potter* or *The Golden Compass*. In the former the focus never leaves Harry, while in *The Golden Compass* the narrative moves away from Lyra only when other characters talk about her (31-32, 175-76, 307-312), so that the protagonists are always the focus of our attention.

### **Characterization: The Orphan Protagonists and their Problematic Parents**

The heroine of *Tanglewreck*, Silver, is an eleven-year-old orphan, although towards the end of the novel in one of the alternative worlds of the novel Silver's parents and her sister Buddleia are still alive (401-8). But for most of the novel, Silver is effectively an orphan, like Harry Potter and Lyra in *The Golden Compass*. Frye does not explicitly state that the protagonist of the romance is an orphan, but in mentioning *Tom Sawyer* he notes that the protagonist is "a youth with no father or mother" (190).

Like Harry and Lyra, Silver is consigned to the care of those who are not her parents. Silver is supposedly cared for by her aunt, Mrs. Rokabye, who is not her aunt at all (402), while Harry is taken in, unwillingly, by his aunt and uncle, the Dursleys, and Lyra spends her first ten years or so in Jordan College, Oxford, under the nominal control of the Master. All three are neglected, although Lyra more benevolently so than the others. Like Harry Potter, and earlier literary orphans like David Copperfield, or Pip in *Great Expectations*, or Jane Eyre, Silver is unloved and uncared for. Like Harry too, she is made to work and is poorly fed by her "aunt".

Although the three protagonists are, for all practical purposes, orphans their parents are nonetheless extremely important, as are other father and mother figures in the novels. Silver's parents are presented as unambiguously good and loving, in contrast to Harry or Lyra's; however,

---

<sup>7</sup> Another example occurs between the chapters twenty-four and twenty-six, where Thugger and Fisty intervene in chapter twenty-five.

they are far less important than the others, although they do seem to signify a kind of nostalgia. Their reappearance towards the end of the novel acts as an example of Frye's “imaginative golden age in time or space” (186), a kind of paradise lost, although Silver decides she must abandon it to fulfill her mission. Like Harry and Lyra, Silver has at least one father figure to help her in Micah, while Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason can be seen as evil versions of the father and mother respectively.

In Harry's case, although his mother, Lily, remains a virtuous and loving figure throughout the series, his father, James, is gradually revealed to be a much more equivocal figure. James's prowess at Quidditch and his wizarding skill and daring are accompanied by arrogance and cruelty which later have repercussions on Harry's life.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, at moments of extreme danger, like Harry's confrontation with the dementors at the end of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (406-07 and 410-12), or his confrontation with Voldemort at the end of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (667-69), he is aided by his father or by both parents, from beyond the grave. There are other father figures for Harry too, Dumbledore most obviously, but also Hagrid, and, in later books, Sirius Black (his godfather), Mad-Eye Moody, and the werewolf, Professor Lupin. All are more exotic and more desirable than Mr. Dursley is, and although all are flawed, all provide Harry with help and support. Lyra's parents are much more problematic figures. Her mother is beautiful, evil, ruthless, and cold, despite her surface charm (Regalia Mason in *Tanglewreck* resembles her more than a little). Her father, Lord Asriel whom Pullman names after the Angel of Death, Azrael, is impressive but equally ruthless and, Lyra comes to think, quite mad (377). Neither helps Lyra in her quest; indeed, they might be said to be her antagonists. However, Lyra has other father and mother figures to help her: the Master of Jordan College, John Faa, Father Coram, Iorek Byrnison the armoured bear, and Lee Scoresby the aeronaut all guard her, while Mrs. Costa briefly acts as a replacement mother. Parents in Winterson's other fiction are often problematic: in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Boating for Beginners*, for example, the daughters have very difficult relationship with their mothers. Fathers are frequently simply absent or insignificant as in *Oranges* and *Sexing the Cherry*, or, if more active, they are problematic, like Noah in *Boating for Beginners*. Even where protagonists seem to have a positive relationship with their parents, as is the case with Henri and

---

<sup>8</sup> Notably though Snape's enmity to Harry, caused by the schoolboy antagonism between Snape and James Potter, and by the fact that James saved Snape's life, which the latter bitterly resents, transferring his enmity to James' son.

Villanelle in *The Passion*, they move so far away from them that the relationship cannot offer any kind of refuge or help. On the contrary, a father figure like Pew in *Lighthousekeeping* has a more satisfactory relationship with the protagonist, but even here the relationship comes to an end as Pew and Silver are separated when the lighthouse is automated and Pew loses his job there. In *Sexing the Cherry* the Dog-Woman and Jordan, the foundling whom she takes in, love each other but can never express those feelings, and they are finally separated, just as Pew and Silver are.

It is interesting to consider these positive and negative parental figures in the three novels in the light of Freud's "Family Romances". Freud suggests many if not all children go through a stage in which they feel that their parents are not lavishing on them the same intensive care as before. He suggests that the children's response to this is to decide that their parents are not in fact their real parents, but stepparents or adoptive parents, and that their real parents are people of far greater importance and/or higher rank (237-39). *Harry Potter* plays with this idea when Harry discovers that his *real* parents are, indeed, people of much greater importance than the odious Dursleys, and that he himself is of the most famous individual in the wizarding world. The "family romance" is no romance, but the truth. As the series progresses, as I have already noted, Harry realizes that his father is not quite the ideal figure he has imagined, although, like the other father figures in the seven-book series, he is still a source of help and inspiration.

Lyra begins by thinking she is an orphan, then discovers that the forbidding but impressive Lord Asriel is in fact her father, and that Mrs. Coulter is her mother. This initially fills her with pride, although by the end of *The Golden Compass*, her feelings are much more mixed. She discovers that her father is ready to sacrifice (and does indeed sacrifice) her Oxford friend, Roger, to fulfill his overweening ambition to destroy Dust, and thereby triumph over death itself, as he thinks (377). At this point Lyra neither loves nor trusts her father; she admires him, fears him, and thinks he is "stark mad" (377 and see 376). When Lyra first discovers that Mrs. Coulter is her mother, she already knows her to be involved in the kidnapping and sacrifice of children (89-90), and her earlier besotted enthusiasm has already been replaced by disillusionment and fear, the fear increasing to terror as the novel progresses (246). In this case Freud's idea of the "family romance" seems to apply, but the bold and daring father and the beautiful and caring mother are soon revealed to be not at all what they seem.

In *Tanglewreck* Silver's real parents are dead (in the main world of the novel), and when they finally reappear towards the end of the novel, their brief appearance makes no great impression on the reader or on Silver. Moreover, although she is delighted to have found them again, Silver decides that she must pursue her quest to find the Timekeeper in the parallel *Tanglewreck* where the novel began. Both the “imaginative golden age” and the “family romance” are evoked only to be instantly dismissed. This seems to suggest that for Winterson any positive vision of the family unit is unsustainable. It is hard to think of a united or unproblematic family in her fiction. As noted above, biological mothers and fathers are often problematic, or, if not problematic, absent or ineffectual in intervening in their children's lives. The families in Winterson's fiction might be summed up by what the first-person narrator says in *The PowerBook* in relation to her parents, “Absent is any real sense of family, of bonding, of belonging” (187), or by the following words of the protagonist and first-person narrator of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: “Families, real ones, are chairs and tables and the right number of cups, but I had no means of joining one, and no means of dismissing my own” (176).

### **The Quest I Fulfilling the Prophecy: Fear, Determination, and Magic**

The first part of the protagonists' quest in the three novels is related to a prophecy, involving them in a destiny which they cannot escape, despite their initial fears and their sense that they cannot fulfil the tasks required of them. Like Harry Potter and Lyra before her, Silver finds herself on a quest which is not of her own choosing, and, like them, she is the subject of a prophecy. Harry Potter's super-normal name is misleading, since his unique nature and position are indicated from the beginning: the lightning-shaped scar on his forehead reveals that he alone withstood Voldemort, and yet at the same time, ironically, it also suggests that he is mysteriously connected to him. Harry is the subject of a prophecy which Voldemort wishes to destroy at all costs, although we do not discover this until the fifth volume of the series, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (811-12, 839-44). Silver too is the subject of a prophecy: she is “The Child with the Golden Face”, as Sniveller, Micah, Eden, and Regalia Mason (alias Maria Prophetessa) all declare (125, 143, 190, 231). It is she whose image appears in the last of the twenty-four pictures on the Timekeeper (229). She herself is also “A Timekeeper” as Micah tells her (190), and there is a special link between her and the magic object, just as there is

between Lyra and the alethiometer. Moreover, Silver's name indicates her special quality, which, as Gabriel explains, makes Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason fear her, for all their respective magic and scientific prowess. "The metal silver reflects nine-tenths of its own light. They fear you because you are shining", he says.<sup>9</sup> When Silver objects: "I don't think I'm the Child with the Golden Face--I'm silver not gold", he adds: "It is the shining that the prophecy means"(368). Similarly, although Lyra is described as a child in Jordan College as "a coarse and greedy little savage, for the most part" (36, and see 34), she is the only one able to learn how to read and interpret the messages of the alethiometer, or Golden Compass. Her name is also significant, suggesting both "liar" and "lyre"; she is an artist in her lies (281), and towards the end of the novel Iorek Byrnison renames her "Lyra Silvertongue" (348, 357). Like Harry and Silver, Lyra is the subject of a mysterious prophecy. Very early in the novel, the Master tells the Librarian: "Lyra has a part to play in all this, and a major one. The irony is that she must do it all without realizing what she's doing." Moreover, if the prophecy is fulfilled, "*she* will be the betrayer, and the experience will be terrible" (31, 32). "Without this child, we shall all die", the witches' consul tells Farder Coram, "But she must fulfill this destiny in ignorance of what she is doing, because only in her ignorance can we be saved" (176). Later the witch Serafina Pekkala tells Lee Scoresby: "If she's told what she must do, it will all fail; death will sweep through all the worlds; it will be the triumph of despair, forever" (310). Thus all three protagonists are chosen, and all feel obliged to pursue the quest assigned to them, despite their fears and sense of unfitness for the task.

Like Lyra and Harry, Silver is both courageous and determined, although not possessed of magic powers like Harry or unusually resourceful like Lyra; at the same time, like them, she is dependent on the help and support of friends and father figures. Silver realizes early on, when she talks to the house, Tanglewreck, that "sometimes you have to do something difficult and dangerous, something you don't want to do at all, and that you have to do it because something more important depends on you" (39). It is a realization which is repeated many times: after she has escaped from Abel Darkwater's house (96), when she realizes she must leave the safe underground world of the Throwbacks to pursue the

---

<sup>9</sup> In *Lighthousekeeping* the protagonist's name is also Silver, and again Winterson reminds the reader of the light-reflecting property of the metal: "it reflects 95% of its own light" (155). Both protagonists are exceptional individuals, but their stories are treated very differently.



Timekeeper (192-93),<sup>10</sup> and when she decides that she must continue her search on the Sands of Time (368-69). When she leaves the Throwbacks Micah tells her that she must go alone, but Gabriel comes with her since, as he tells her: “You called to me and I found you” (202). When she goes to the Sands of Time Gabriel is with her and the relationship between them has already been established as one of mutual aid and interdependence, like that of Lyra and Roger or, even more, Lyra and Pan, her daemon.

Unlike Silver, Lyra is always determined to rescue the kidnapped children and her father, Lord Asriel. Although she is often afraid (147, 214, 235), especially of Mrs. Coulter (246), she always overcomes her fear (210, 389), and she prevails in the most unpropitious circumstances through a combination of luck and resourcefulness. Through lies and good acting, she tricks both Mrs. Coulter and the usurper king of the armoured bears, Iofur Raknison (285-86, 336-43), she gets the escaping children to throw snow into the eyes of the Tartar guards at Bolvangar (290), and she fails only in her attempt to save Roger at the end of the novel (393). Of course, Lyra has many helpers: John Faa and the gyptians, the witch Serafina Pekkala and her daemon Kaisa, the armoured bear Iorek Byrnison, and the aeronaut Lee Scoresby, and the alethiometer. At the end of the novel, we see Lyra and Pan agreeing to go on into the other world in order to preserve Dust and oppose Lord Asriel (398-99).

Harry shares Lyra's determination, especially when he realizes the high stakes involved in preventing Voldemort from gaining possession of the philosopher's stone: the return of Lord Voldemort and of his reign of terror (291). Despite his fears, Harry goes on to confront Voldemort alone at the end of the novel after Ron has been disabled and Hermione sent back to raise the alarm. But it is not only his courage and his extraordinary wizarding skills which enable him to defeat Voldemort, but maternal love. Dumbledore tells him “if there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. . . . to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin” (321). Harry's help here, as often in the later books, comes from beyond the grave.

Like Harry and Lyra, Silver is frightened at every stage of the journey she must undertake, although she overcomes her fear and goes on (79, 192, 279). The adventures reach their climax in the confrontation between Silver and Regalia Mason in the final chapter. Earlier, Silver has been able to help Micah rescue Gabriel from the Black Hole through love: “he was

---

<sup>10</sup> The underground world of the Throwbacks in *Tanglewreck* recalls that of Jeanne DuPrau's 2003 *The City of Ember*.

travelling faster than light, because he was travelling at the speed of love” (305 and see 338). Like Rowling but unlike Pullman (at least until the end of the third volume of the trilogy), Winterson evokes the power of love to defeat evil. Even when Pullman has the love and sexual attraction between Will and Lyra defeat the forces of evil in *The Amber Spyglass*, he immediately forces a separation between them. All the windows between the multiple worlds of the novel must be closed except one,<sup>11</sup> and while characters can survive for some time in a world which is not their own, they will die sooner rather than later. Since Will and Lyra originally come from different worlds, they can never live together (440-41, 456). Paradise is saved, but immediately lost again.

## **The Quest II: The Journey and the Final Conflict**

*Tanglewreck*, like *Harry Potter* and *The Golden Compass* follows the romance narrative structure of “the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures” followed by “the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die” (Frye, 187). All three novels include journeys, but in *Tanglewreck* and *The Golden Compass* the journeys encompass more dramatic shifts in time and space than Harry Potter's do, at least in the first book of the series. Many of Harry's journeys involve the magical mastery of space. Delivered to the Dursleys as a baby by Hagrid on his flying motorbike, Harry goes into Diagon Alley through a wall which magically dissolves, he goes to Hogwarts by a train which he gets to through another dissolving wall, and finally he descends into the labyrinth inside Hogwarts using magic to gain access to the chamber where Voldemort/Quirrell awaits him.

But the journeys and the means by which they are effected in *The Golden Compass* and even more in *Tanglewreck* present a much more radical challenge to conventional ideas of time and space.<sup>12</sup> In *The Golden Compass* Pullman mixes past and present realistic modes of transport with magical ones. More or less realistically, Lyra travels to London by zeppelin with Mrs. Coulter, by barge with the Costa family, by sailing ship and sled with John Faa, by balloon with Lee Scoresby, and on the back of the armoured bear, Iorek Byrnison. However, Lee Scoresby's balloon is

---

<sup>11</sup> The one that must be left open is that from the world of the dead into that of the living.

<sup>12</sup> Winterson continues to undermine conventional ideas of time and space in her most recent novel, *The Stone Gods* (2007), where the reader and the characters, namely Spike and Billie, cannot tell whether certain central events belong to the past or the future (174-75, 187, 201-02).

pulled to Svalbard by the magical powers of Serafina Pekkala and her witch-clan. In *Tanglewreck* the journeys are even more varied and disorientating, since they involve radical shifts in time as well as space, shifts which only Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason can control. In the very first chapter, the red London bus and the children on it are swept up in a Time Tornado and taken, as we later discover, to the fantastic space of the Einstein Line. A little later, when Silver and Mrs. Rokabye set out on their journey to London, the train suddenly hurtles forward when Silver holds the pin she has found (which is in fact one of the hands of the Timekeeper) and thinks: “*Maybe if I point it towards London, we'll get there quicker*” (49). While Silver's next journey, down into the underground world of the Throwbacks, is more realistically portrayed--she and Gabriel go down a manhole and walk through the tunnels--when she arrives she discovers a people who have lived for hundreds of years, and a Woolly Mammoth left over from the Ice Age.

As the novel continues, the journeys in time and space become ever more dramatic. We go back via Micah's memories to the eighteenth century and Bedlam, or Bethlehem hospital (116-18), further back to 1582 and Pope Gregory XIII (221), and even further to the temple of the Egyptian god, Ra (374-76), among others. As we do so, we discover Abel Darkwater as the Master of Bedlam, and Regalia Mason in an earlier incarnation as Maria Prophetessa. More remarkably, we go forward--and/or perhaps sideways--to The Einstein Line, the Star Road, the Black Hole, and the Sands of Time. Yet the Einstein line also contains a facsimile of the Vatican, with all the Popes (209). The Star Road, as Regalia Mason tells Silver: “winds through the past and the future, through worlds dead and new-born. It is a trade road and a traveller's road, and something else too--it is part of the journey” (259). It is also, as Regalia Mason omits to tell Silver, a place of death or at least transformation where an individual may dissolve “into her wave function” (275). The Black Hole is another form of limbo or torture chamber where there is no time and where the unfortunate twins who are used in the Time Transfusions and other experiments are discarded and become “human spaghetti” (268 and see 266-68). The Sands of Time present the appearance of a banal English seaside town, but in fact conceal another reality. The modes of transportation to all these other worlds are fantastic or belong to science fiction, especially those used by Regalia Mason. For example, Regalia Mason uses a futuristic quantum computer and twins to be teleported to follow Silver and Gabriel who have magically leapt into Time to get to the Checkpoint for the Einstein Line (204), although they are not aware of this. Abel Darkwater simply appears there, and Mrs.

Rokabye and Sniveller get to the Checkpoint through the magical “Walworth Hole” (311-13). Most of these journeys are effected by various unexplained types of magic. Winterson distinguishes between Regalia Mason who uses a futuristic and fictionalized version of science and technology and Abel Darkwater who relies on more traditional types of magic to move from one world and one time to another. Other characters, like Silver and Gabriel, and Thugger, Fisty, and Sir Roger Rover, move backwards and forwards in time by means of “wormholes” (215-17, 356-57).<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately, all three books culminate in a decisive struggle: in *Harry Potter* Harry confronts Voldemort/Quirrell (310-18) and in *Tanglewreck* Silver confronts Regalia Mason who finally reveals her evil nature as she takes the form of a serpent (406-08). Here the reader can hardly fail to be reminded of Voldemort, who on occasion takes the form of a snake. In *The Golden Compass* the crucial battle is that between the two armoured bears, which Lyra has engineered (348-54), although she does not directly participate in it. In *Tanglewreck*, all of the journeys made through time and space are related to Silver's quest to find the Timekeeper, or to the struggle between Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason (alias Maria Prophetess) to obtain it, and so become “Lord of the Universe” (175). Finally, Silver finds the Timekeeper and succeeds in keeping it away from both Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason, thus saving the various worlds of the novel from the power of both.

## The Struggle between Good and Evil and Its Resolution

In all three books, evil is represented by powerful figures who oppose the hero or heroine and yet who are also connected to them. In the first book of the *Harry Potter* series the strange affinity between Harry and Voldemort is clearly although implicitly established,<sup>14</sup> and in *Tanglewreck* while Silver is never deceived by Abel Darkwater,<sup>15</sup> she *is* attracted and

---

<sup>13</sup> Wormholes are also evoked in *Gut Symmetries*: for Stella they are “a membrane between now and then”, while for Alice, the physicist narrator, they “only a theoretical possibility” (122).

<sup>14</sup> The connection is suggested by Voldemort's inability to kill Harry; also both Voldemort and Harry speaks parseltongue, the language of snakes, their wands share the only two feathers given by a phoenix (96), and the Sorting Hat hesitates between Gryffindor and Slytherin (Voldemort's old house) when placing Harry.

<sup>15</sup> Like Silver's name, Darkwater's reminds the reader of *Lighthousekeeping*, and the character of Babel Dark. Despite the similarity in names, however, there is no great similarity between the two characters. Dark is a violent, tortured man, whose

tempted by Regalia Mason's apparent concern for her (403). From the first time she meets him, Silver is aware that Darkwater is evil and not to be trusted (39, 58, 213). In the case of Regalia Mason, both Micah and Gabriel warn Silver not to trust her because she is dangerous (167, 368). However, Silver does not see Regalia Mason's evil power: she does not realize at first that Mason is able to stop her remembering her mission to recover the Timekeeper and that she tries to kill her (255-60 and see 275). It is only later, when Gabriel again warns her that Mason is “tempting [her] like the serpent” and Silver decides that she cannot stay with her parents and her sister in their world's version of Tanglewreck that Mason reveals her true self: a serpent (406-07). In *The Golden Compass* Lyra's parents are also her opponents. Silver and Lyra have to understand and reject the evil represented by Regalia Mason and Mrs. Coulter respectively, while Harry must recognize both the extent and the limits of his connection to the power-hungry and evil Voldemort.

All three novels use the phenomenon of mind reading, and in all three cases the ability to read another person's mind implies power over that person, which can potentially be put to evil use. This is especially true in the case of Voldemort and Harry Potter, where Voldemort's ability to penetrate Harry's mind threatens Harry's sense of identity as good in opposition to Voldemort as the embodiment of evil. Abel Darkwater and Regalia Mason can both read each other's minds, and this symbolizes the power struggle between them in their search for the Timekeeper. Both of them can also read Silver's mind, and both attempt to control her. Darkwater tries and fails to read Silver's mind twice in the novel, but she realizes what he is doing and stops him (59, 378-80). He does manage to hypnotize her a little later, but does not succeed in learning all he wishes to learn from her (81-84). Regalia Mason stops Silver remembering her mission temporarily (255-59) and successfully prevents Silver from telling Darkwater what he wishes to know (379, 381). Still, this is not seen to threaten Silver's identity in the way that Voldemort threatens Harry's, even though Regalia Mason can exercise temporary power over Silver by blocking or freeing her memory at will, as Silver belatedly realizes (395). Silver does not experience the blinding pain or the threat of imminent dissolution that threaten Harry, despite the power struggle over her. Moreover, in *Tanglewreck* mind reading can sometimes have positive connotations: Micah and Gabriel can communicate non-verbally and over

---

behaviour is often reprehensible, but he is shown a great deal of narrative sympathy. In *Tanglewreck* Darkwater is hard for the reader to take seriously; despite Micah and the other Throwbacks' fear of him, he is more of a pantomime villain than anything else.

great distances. They do so to help Gabriel when he is threatened with becoming “human spaghetti” (268) when he is thrust into the Black Hole (271-2) and when he is forced to enter the version of Bethlehem Hospital on the Einstein Line (329). Silver also learns to do this (201, 293, 303-04) in order to support Gabriel. Conversely, Harry is never able to learn the skill of occlumency in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, and he is unable to prevent Voldemort's violation of his psyche, although he does learn how to penetrate Snape's mind, with uncomfortable consequences for them both. In *The Golden Compass* Lyra and Pan routinely each know what the other is thinking. In *Harry Potter and Tanglewreck*, the evil characters and plot are finally defeated by love, but in Pullman's world, as we have seen, the solution is less simple, and less sentimental.

### **Conclusion: The Novels' Different Worlds in Space and Time and “Family Romances”**

Finally, I should like to return to the idea of the “imaginative golden age in time or space” (Frye, 186) and Freud's idea of “family romance” in relation to the contrasting worlds of the three novels. All the books evoke the idea of the perfect family (at least intermittently), only to dismiss it as impossible or to relegate it to the world beyond the grave or to an alternative reality. In *Tanglewreck* it is evoked as an alternative reality, but it is quickly dismissed as apparently unattainable or, at least, unsustainable over time. In *Harry Potter* it is continuously evoked and yet unattainable since the ideal parents are dead. Finally, in *The Golden Compass* Lyra discovers by the end of the novel that not only is her apparently beautiful and good mother (Mrs. Coulter) vicious, cold, and completely ruthless, but that her impressive, bold, and daring father (Lord Asriel) is almost more dangerous, and, she thinks, crazy to boot. All three novels play on the reader's pity for the orphan protagonist, suggest through the idea of prophecy the vital importance of an apparently insignificant child, tantalizingly suggest that the child's parents were or are ideal, but then either remove the parents or show them to be deeply flawed. Winterson and Pullman use the idea of “the multiple worlds predicted by quantum theory” (*The Amber Spyglass*, 77),<sup>16</sup> while Rowling transforms our world into one divided between Muggles and wizards, and evokes the world beyond the grave. As Jacqueline Rose says in *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, children's fiction is often informed

---

<sup>16</sup> The idea of the multiple worlds of quantum theory also reappears in *The Stone Gods* (62, 68, 181, 183, 205).

by “the idea . . . of a primitive or lost state to which the child has special access” (9). This “lost state” surely corresponds to Frye's “imaginative golden age in time or space” or to Freud's “family romance”, but while the three protagonists search for it, it remains always unattainable, elsewhere, in another time, another place, another world.

For all three writers the golden age and the perfect family are dreams or ideals, no more, with the large exception of the epilogue to the final book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, where Harry and Ginny, Ron and Hermione, and Draco Malfoy are all seen sending their children off to Hogwarts. Here a positive version of the nuclear family seems to be reestablished. By contrast, in Pullman's works, there is no such reassertion of the ideal family or even of potentially romantic relationships. Pullman's trilogy ends with Will and Lyra recognizing that they must be separated in order to assure the safety of the various worlds of the novels. In Winterson's works most of the protagonists are finally isolated from their families by time, space, and/or death, although at the end of *Tanglewreck* Silver and Gabriel do remain together in Silver's world of Tanglewreck, at least for a time. Thus Rowling and Winterson both allow their protagonists to triumph over the separations enforced by diverse times and spaces, at least temporarily, while Pullman permits Will only the friendship of Mary Malone in their world, and brief moments of mental communication with Lyra in her different world, once a year. Even if Winterson cannot envisage a positive version of the family, the fact that Silver and Gabriel are together at the end of *Tanglewreck* perhaps suggests that an alternative time and space to those dominated by Regalia Mason and Abel Darkwater is conceivable.

