

"You may have heard of me": An Archetypal Analysis of the Protagonist of Patrick Rothfuss' *The Name of the Wind*

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1. Introduction

Kote looked up, and for a second Chronicler saw past the anger that lay glittering on the surface of his eyes. For a moment he saw the pain underneath, raw and bloody [...]

“Everyone thinks you’re dead.”

“You don’t get it, do you?” Kote shook his head, stuck between amusement and exasperation. “That’s the whole point. People don’t look for you when you’re dead. [...]”

“Some stories paint you as little more than a red-handed killer.”

“I’m that too.” [...]

“The stories are saying ‘assassin’ not ‘hero.’ Kvothe the Arcane and Kvothe Kingkiller are two very different men.”

“The important people know the difference [...]”

“Certainly. [...] But you of all people should realize how thin the line is between the truth and a compelling lie.”

[...] Kote’s expression was haunted, eyes half in this world, half elsewhere, remembering.

Chronicler found himself thinking of a story he had heard. [...] The story told of how Kvothe had gone looking for his heart’s desire. He had to trick a demon to get it. But once it rested in his hand he was forced to fight an angel to keep it. *I believe it,*

Chronicler found himself thinking. [...] *This is the face of a man who has killed an angel.* (The Name of the Wind 44–46)

So unfolds an important part of the first conversation between Chronicler and Kvothe, after the former discovers Kote’s true identity in Patrick Rothfuss’ 2007 fantasy novel *The Name of the Wind*. This conversation aptly reveals the inner conflict experienced by the novel’s protagonist, Kvothe, in the form of various dichotomies; anger and pain in his eyes, his amusement and exasperation in response to Chronicler’s prodding, truth and myth regarding his deeds, and his status as killer and hero. These dichotomies are clearly used by the author to highlight the diversity of Kvothe’s character. At this point of the novel, the reader is unaware of the various deeds that the protagonist has done, but already they can detect that these actions are regarded with both scorn and esteem by the people of Temerant¹, and more importantly, the agent of those actions is himself conflicted about the deeds he has done. Not only does this imply the existence of an interesting selection of myths about the main character in the world of Temerant, but it also creates an impression of a deep, well-

¹ Name of the novel’s world. It is never mentioned in the novel itself. Retrieved from Patrick Rothfuss’ blog: <http://blog.patrickrothfuss.com/2014/07/our-triumphant-conclusion-chocolate-malts-and-the-name-of-the-world/>

constructed character to whom a reader can relate to in some way and who does not lack in complexity. It is thus appropriate that the paragraph also contains references to angels and demons, the symbolic representatives of heaven and hell, good and evil, as it is the goal of this thesis to argue that the main character in *The Name of the Wind* exhibits emotions and behaviours that cannot be entirely categorized per the ancient duality of good and evil. In other words, he transcends simplistic binary distinctions between hero and villain.

The following examination is divided into two main thematic parts. The first part examines the importance of character to novels in general, a brief examination of the history of fantasy, a short analysis of characters that can be used for comparison, and the establishment of the archetypes 'hero' and 'villain' through which a detailed analysis of Kvothe is conducted in the second part of the thesis.

2. Importance of Character

Characters have existed long before the novel. From the earliest orally transmitted stories and myths, to the theatre of Ancient Greece, to Shakespeare and the modern written mediums, fictional characters have always been at the centre of human fascination, and the characters in the novel are no exception.

Many, if not all, of the elements present in the narrative of novels can be divided into two parts: characters and actions. The importance of these two elements has been a subject of academic debate ever since Aristotle, who proposed that it was action that held the most essential role in Greek plays, and that characters only existed for the sake of driving the plot (Abbott 123). Despite referring drama – which is both an auditory and a written form of narrative –, Aristotle’s argument can be applied to the modern novel as well. At the other end of the spectrum we have Leslie Stephen, a nineteenth-century critic who, according to Abbott, asserted that it was character that was most important to the novel and that the “great object of narrative action was the revelation of character” (124). In the middle, we have Henry James, who suggested that the two are tied together so closely that they are ultimately inseparable, or as Abbott puts it, “[c]haracters... have *agency*: they cause things to happen. Conversely, as these people drive the action, they necessarily reveal who they are in terms of their motives, their strength, weakness [...], capacity to love, hate, cherish [...] and so on” (124). Despite arguing for both character and action, James – like Stephen – draws attention to the importance of character as a catalyst for the action that reveals something about its agent. This synthesis of action and character is so significant that everyday language has adopted some usage of character names to describe some essential feature that is associated with these characters – two such examples are the Oedipus- and Lolita complexes, named according to the fictional characters that originally exhibit these tendencies. (Bennett and Royle 49-50).

Of these two principal aspects of the novel, it is harder to talk about character than action. In terms of narrative analysis, Russian Formalism produced two key terms: *fabula* and *syuzhet*, commonly translated into story and plot respectively. *Fabula* refers to the chronological order of events that are present in a novel and *syuzhet* refers to the order that these events are actually presented in the novel (Cobley 15, Rapaport 68). Thus, a novel is never required to present actions and events in a

chronological order, but in the end, it is possible to reorganize or extrapolate them into a linear chain $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$ etc., unless certain links in the action are deliberately omitted, and describe them (Abbott 125). The agents of these actions are, however, more difficult to understand. Following Abbott's example, let us imagine a causative chain A (action) \rightarrow B (reaction) (125). We can easily describe action A and the events that led to it, but how characters react to that action is not necessarily self-explanatory, and we must find an explanation from the characters themselves. Our interpretation of characters is affected by our history with them, in other words, the extent that an author has revealed their personalities, past and relations to us. This in turn leads to multiple interpretations, which can change dramatically depending on what actions these characters take further on in the narrative. Ultimately, actions are easy to describe, but since we can only peer into the minds of characters in certain types of narration, we must usually infer the reasons for their behaviours (Abbott 126).

The difficulty of character interpretation is not always encountered in novels as it is dependent on the complexity of character. According to Abbot, characters can generally be categorized into two groups: flat- and round characters. Flat characters, denoted by their simplicity and predictable behaviour, lack in depth and have been reduced to being less than human with no complexities to be unravelled by the readers. Such characters are usually found in comedy, satire and melodrama for comic relief. On the other hand, round characters are marked by their complex nature in regards to the actions and events in which they operate. While flat characters can provide stark and meaningful contrasts in an otherwise serious work – thus making them valuable literary assets –, round characters are usually regarded as being more valuable because they seem “closer to the way people really are” (126-127). Even though fantasy literature is concerned with all matters unrealistic regarding the real world, this does not mean that human characters in fantasy literature cannot be portrayed in the same manner as realistic characters in other genres, unless it is goal of an author to change human nature or veer from it entirely. Bennet and Royle suggest three requirements that are mandatory for a realistic character. The first requirement states that a character must have a valid name in addition to acting and speaking in a manner that adheres to real life (51). It should be noted that fantasy literature does not automatically exclude these realistic elements, but the supernatural, in fact, serves as an extension for both actions and speech. For example, if we have two novels, A and B, that attempt to

describe the Middle Ages as accurately as possible, but novel B adds supernatural elements to its narrative, the potential actions and speech in novel B become greater compared to novel A. The second requirement is complexity, which can be achieved by giving a character various traits – some of which may contradict each other. This serves to make a character unpredictable to an extent by having their actions stem from multiple impulses. The third requirement, however, is that “these tensions, contradictions, multiplicities should cohere in a single identity”, concluding that a realistic character possesses both multiplicity and unity (51).

However, this pursuit of a realistic character leads to the question whether characters can be real or not. It is enough to state that characterization can never fully capture the complexity of real people, and thus, it is always flattening to a certain degree (Abbott 129). This leads us to the idea of character types. Character types refer to the common roles that characters have filled throughout the history of literature. For example, the damsel in distress, the orphan and the whore with a heart of gold are all character types that have been present in literature for an extended period (Abbott 129). When types are applied to real people, however, the results can be disastrous – the Holocaust remains as the most horrid reminder of this. After all, was it not the association of Jews with negative traits that led to genocide? Hence, it can be argued that separating people into types denies them their full humanity and their capacity to surprise. This, however, leads us to another question: can humans characterize each other without the use of types? Describing someone you know to another person without the use of types is extremely difficult (Abbott 129). I propose that this is a substantial reason why individual readers grow attached to different characters; because it is a human tendency to attach differing traits to various people, and seeing these trait-possessing agents act out on a page serves as a flawed mirror to reality. While characters can never become as complex as real people, characterization can still provide readers with an image of a person that has a compelling degree of complexity. Abbott argues that while a character is usually seen as a holder of a certain dominating type, e.g. a military hero, they are in fact a compound of multiple different types; thus a military hero becomes a type that contains the character types of the school teacher and the reluctant soldier as seen in the character played by Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan* (131). This way, even if multiple characters are categorized under the same character type, the components of that type can vary

greatly, which in turn not only results in differing characters of the same type but also provides multiple sources for the construction of a complex and appealing character.

3. On the Origins of Modern Fantasy and Some Split Characters

Myths and the supernatural have always been present in human cultures. However, the earliest works – maybe with the exception of *Gilgamesh* – that survived in written form are from the era of Classic Greece, these works often depicting the acts of gods, semi-divine beings and heroes. Similar narrative modes are present especially in the Old Testament as well. Since the supernatural is the definitive feature of fantasy, religion can be used as a source of these features. Modern fantasy draws many of its aspects from these old tales and younger ones. Armit, for example, explains that John Bunyan's Christian allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, depicts the hardships that the protagonist – and by extension, everyone – has to go through in order to finally arrive to the Celestial City. The same pattern can be found in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in Frodo's character (14). In addition, many other contemporary fantasy novels rely on concepts that are present in Christianity, such as witchcraft, which is a central theme in the Harry Potter series. However there exists a divide between the content of the Old- and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains a large selection of fables and dreams, and in contrast, the New Testament is more focused on realism (14). Armit deduces that it is thanks to Christian fantasists that used the fantasy-filled Old Testament in their writings, rather than the mimetic assumptions of the New Testament that today we have such tales as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Chronicles of Narnia* (15).

Naturally, fantasy novels bring together supernatural elements from a far wider range of literature than just the Greek myths and the Bible, to the extent that there is no absolute consensus on the development of nineteenth- and twentieth-century fantasy. Armit deduces that some analysts trace the lineage of fantasy through European fairy tale writers, such as Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault, while others, like Tolkien, trace it through Old Norse legends, Anglo-Saxon tales and Arthurian myth (18). Tolkien identifies three approaches that have influenced the evolution of fantasy: "independent evolution (or rather invention) of the similar; inheritance from a common ancestry; and diffusion at various times from one or more centres ("On Fairy Stories"). Nonetheless, he admits that while the role which these approaches have had to the genre is significant, it is ultimately impossible to determine the exact lineage of fantasy ("On Fairy Stories"). However, it is undeniable that Tolkien and his work is part of the reason why the medieval setting is prevalent in

twentieth- and twenty-first century fantasy (Armitt 18). This tendency can presently be seen, for example, in George R. R. Martin's best-seller series of fantasy novels, *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

3.1 On Frankenstein, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde² and doubles

In *The Name of the Wind*, Patrick Rothfuss has established a protagonist that possesses characteristics of both good and evil, and thus, it is necessary to look at some other characters that are portrayed as possessing both or one of these characteristics. These two attributes are most commonly divided into two separate entities of the same character; one presents good and the other presents evil that is waiting to materialize. This is the idea of the double self, also known as doppelgänger (Apter 48). Here, the characters Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Frankenstein and his monster are analysed to demonstrate the duality that these characters represent. While these characters come from the Gothic genre, rather than directly from fantasy, both are concerned with the supernatural. Ergo, they are suitable characters for comparison. However, since the protagonist of *The Name of the Wind* is a single personality in a single body – rather than two in one –, *Frankenstein* receives a deeper discussion.

The double is usually presented as a separate personality or entity of their compatriot. In his novel titled *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson presents Edward Hyde as the malevolent personality of the apparently respectable doctor Henry Jekyll. Despite Jekyll and Hyde's differing appearance, they are ultimately two personalities in the same body that struggle for control, an allegory for the conflict between good and evil. It is important to note, however, that Hyde came to existence solely due to Jekyll's desire to indulge in his own socially unacceptable impulses without exposing himself to public scrutiny, much like the protagonist in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. This forces us to consider that if Jekyll, the good personality, inherently had the potential and desire to commit vices, then good is always accompanied by some degree of evil and Hyde becomes merely a manifestation of this evil, trying to overthrow the good in Jekyll. Thus, it is more accurate to state that Jekyll is in conflict with himself, and the aforementioned allegory can be expanded to also include the struggle of good and evil inside the human consciousness as well, becoming a metaphor of an integral part of the human condition.

² The sections discussing these characters were written using plot summaries of their respective novels. Summaries retrieved from <http://www.sparknotes.com>

The double as separate entity, on the other hand, can be found in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which Victor Frankenstein and his monster are portrayed as characters of duality. Similarly to Dr Jekyll and his double, both Victor and the creature are driven by their separate impulses: Victor pursues his desire to create life through science while his creation seeks revenge. However, the creature behaves this way only due to the way he is treated by Victor and others. For example, despite saving a young girl from a river, he is violently driven away due to his monstrous appearance. In addition, Victor denies him his only wish of getting a female of his kind, thus transforming him into the monster that Victor initially saw. The creature responds in kind to the way he is treated: he responds to mistreatment with violence. From these facts, we can infer that the creature is not inherently evil, but his constant mistreatment by humans drives him to commit atrocities towards Victor whom he sees as responsible for his suffering, and at the end feels guilt and remorse for his actions and Victor's death.

The creature is a character that is initially presented as evil through the murder of Victor's brother, William, but is further on revealed to be surprisingly intelligent and benevolent. Victor's duality, on the other hand, is brought out through the idea of responsibility. When the reality of his creation does not match the image in his head, Victor becomes horrified and abandons the creature. This ultimately leads to his brother's death, making Victor indirectly responsible for the crime as well. He is given a chance for redemption by creating a partner for his creation, but again refuses to act in his own play of God, denying his own metaphorical child happiness.

Despite escaping responsibility towards the creature, Victor does not deny his responsibility for *creating* the creature. Victor initially agrees to create a female companion to his creation, but only because he fears that refusal will lead to the death of his family and friends by the hand his own creation. He thus feels responsible for creating this potential killer and does not wish that his actions bring misery to those he cares about. Additionally, Victor intends to confront the creature prior to getting married despite the latter's obvious advantage, showing a degree of self-sacrifice and heroism. Finally, he retreats to North Pole in an attempt to kill the monster and prevent it from harming the rest of society.

We can see that despite examining these characters through the duality of good and evil, none of them are one dimensional. By using the literary convention of the double, both authors have demonstrated that good and evil are two sides of the same coin; both can be found in every individual, be they human or otherwise.

4. Archetypes

The concept of archetypes was first presented by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Compared to the idea of character type, archetype is a broader term that includes characters, themes and symbols. Specifically, an archetype is one of the aforementioned elements that has occurred so frequently “in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore, dreams and rituals [...] as to suggest [...] that it embodies some essential element of ‘universal’ human experience” (Baldick 16). Jung applied the term mostly to psychology and his idea of the collective unconscious – which many scholars regard as unfounded –, but he also explored the appearance of archetypes in myth and fairy tale. This led to the acknowledgement that some of the models which he identified, such as the hero and the wise old man, have been frequently used in literature (Garry and El-Shamy xvi). Maud Bodkin asserts that archetypes, rather than being interpreted in terms of psychology, should be seen as “persistent cultural symbols that are passed down through generations via folklore and literature” or what she refers to as the ‘archetypal pattern’ (qtd. in Gary and El-Shamy, xvii). Since hero characters have been universally present in literature, it is important to consider what the hero archetype encompasses so that we can establish how well Kvothe fits into this archetypal pattern.

4.1 The hero archetype

Throughout its history, literature has always been fascinated with the conflict between good and evil, the former usually being presented by a hero. Despite the common usage of such characters, the hero is a multifaceted archetype, already implied by the title of Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Still, Campbell manages to identify a commonly employed structure of a hero’s journey which involves three parts: departure, initiation and return.

Departure usually begins when a hero receives a call to adventure, usually by a chance encounter with something that is not wholly understood. This herald, as Campbell calls them, “is often dark, loathly, or terrifying, judged evil by the world ... [o]r the herald is a beast” and yet they are tied to mystery and the unknown which the hero craves to uncover (44). The herald’s nature can vary; some are benevolent while others are malignant and the hero may be forced to answer the call that leads to wonder (42-48). Afterwards, the hero meets a protective figure, usually in the form of an old man, whose task is to aid the hero. The old man serves many roles: he could be a hermit, a wizard, a teacher or a smith that supplies the hero with knowledge and armaments that will guide them

through the upcoming trials (57, 59-60). Finally, departure transits to initiation when the hero meets the guardian of the first threshold, beyond which lies the unknown with all its mystery and danger. The guardian mostly manifests as a deceitful, supernatural being that the hero must overcome through wit, knowledge or enlightenment to leave behind the bounds of the familiar sphere of life (64, 68, 73). Alternatively, it is possible that rather facing a threshold guardian, “the hero is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died” only to be reborn later – either literally or figuratively. This scenario takes the symbolic form that is known as the belly of the whale which has been used throughout many cultures like the Bearing Strait Eskimos, the Zulus and the Greeks (74). In this case, it is rebirth that signals the start of initiation.

Initiation begins when the hero traverses the first threshold into the unknown “where [they] must survive a succession of trials”, aided by everything they have received from the wise old man they met during departure or a benign power (81). The presented trials can vary greatly, and initiation can take a multitude of courses depending on the narrative. However, the goal of the hero quest is usually the acquisition of something valuable, a boon to be used for the betterment of others or for personal gain, the latter often ending in tragedy as seen with the character of King Midas and his golden touch (163, 167). Finally, when the hero reaches their goal, they must return with the acquired trophy. For now, it is enough to say that it is a common element for the hero to return to the familiar sphere of life where non-heroes reside or to refuse the return entirely (167).

It should be noted that this three-phased structure is not a rigid one. Campbell notes that “[m]any tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle [...], others string a number of independent cycles into a single series” and “[d]iffering characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes” (212).

4.1.1 Characteristics of heroes

A common structure for the hero’s journey has now been established, but there is still a question to be answered: what is it that makes heroes what they are? Hence, it is vital to examine the common characteristics of a heroic character.

While Campbell focuses mostly on the structure of the hero’s quest, he touches upon some heroic characteristics. One important characteristic that he identifies is that “the hero should be endowed

with what the troubadours and minnesingers termed the “gentle heart” (99). This term is open to multiple interpretations, but the most important heroic concepts that it encases are empathy and compassion, in other words, how the hero feels and acts towards their own kind and others. Since heroes – like villains – usually possess and practice the use of power that makes them in some way superior in comparison to the average human, it is vital that the hero does not fall into self-indulgence or temptation to misuse their power, lest they abandon the importance of others (Alsford 81). This leads to the idea perhaps best conveyed by a quote associated with *Spiderman*: “With great power comes great responsibility.” Mike Alsford suggests that this responsibility dictates that the hero interacts with the surrounding world in an ethical manner regardless of how they are treated by it: “The refusal to dominate as the primary mode of relating to the world is a characteristic trait of the hero and this is often in the face of aggression and abuse” (47). Furthermore, it is characteristic of a hero to put aside their powers and make themselves vulnerable (49).

Despite the potential of the fantasy genre to generate non-human heroes, we find that this role is usually reserved for the human character. Possibly, this is done to support the mimetic mode of representation – to make them as close to real people as possible. As discussed in Chapter 2, a complex character is expected have their actions stem from multiple impulses, and humans certainly provide a rich source for such drives. Additionally, having the hero’s actions derive from humanness serves to make them closer to the reader “by strengthening the common ground between [the hero] and the reader”, a modern view on heroism (Armitt 14). This notion is highlighted in the character of Batman, who is “driven by very human emotions” and his heroics “issue out of passion and his own pain” rather than “lofty ideals”, making him an empathetic and humane character (Alsford 64). Thus, it is empathy and compassion originating from humane drives that could define the modern form of the hero character, and from these stems Alsford’s remark of “the risk of self-destruction” from the act that may be the definitive form of heroism: self-sacrifice (50).

4.2 The villain archetype

Compared to their polar opposite, the hero, villains have not received – to my knowledge – enough academic attention to allow for a thorough analysis. However, as with heroes, it is possible to identify some of the key characteristics that villains usually possess.

4.2.1 Characteristics of villains

As one would expect, the traits of a villain are often opposite to those of a hero. The hero and the villain both possess power, and it is usually the way and the cause for which they use this power that divides the two. Where the hero is concerned for those around him, the villain sees themselves as superior to others, seeing them as means to an end. The villain strives to control and manipulate the surrounding world to create a world that suits them which often leads them to take law into their own hands and removing all obstacles through coercion and force (Alsford 39, 49, 50, 113). Villains do not act according to established rules and conventions, but act according to their own will and are often willing to do unthinkable deeds “that fall outside of both conscience and law” (87, 113).

However, one must also consider the possibility that a character who does not desire to dominate or hurt others could succumb to evil, which is a constant threat that hero-characters face (Alsford 52). It is possible for a character to hurt others not out of “rational or conscious desire” but by losing themselves to “some hidden beast within” (128). Generally, this scenario takes place when a character loses themselves to a strong negative emotion, like rage or sorrow. Such is the case with characters like Batman and Wolverine; their traumatizing experiences have given them power, yet they both fear that one day they will succumb to the temptation of using it to further goals that are in conflict with their own ideals (138). Thus, evil can be viewed as something that villains embrace, but also something that heroes must face inside their own minds.

5. Analysis

The Name of the Wind is divided into two parts: the first takes place in the present where Kvothe's adventures – at least ones discussed in the book – have come to an end and the second is his story that he reveals to the Chronicler. While the second part is the dominant one, the story is frequently paused by events that take place in the narrative. This analysis proceeds in the chronological order of events as far as possible.

5.1 Departure

The story begins with an eleven-year-old Kvothe travelling with his parents and their troupe. Shortly after arriving in a small town, Kvothe witnesses an arcanist – a wizard of the novel's world – drive away the mayor and the constable by calling the wind – a feat that Kvothe thought to be mere fantasy. He then invites the arcanist – named Ben – to the troupe. This event serves a multitude of meanings. First, it introduces Kvothe to the unknown powers of the world, triggering his curiosity towards them. Following Campbell's model, this serves as an initial call to adventure. Second, it serves as the meeting between the protagonist and the wise old man, yet another common feature of the hero cycle. Third, the event reveals Kvothe's inner character by having him admit that while he "felt sorry for the old man alone on the road" his "reasons for inviting Ben into [their] troupe were not entirely altruistic" referring to his desire to learn the name of the wind (TNotW 63). By no means is curiosity a villainous characteristic, but an extremely human drive, and by having the protagonist admit that he was motivated by both the impulse to help and his personal desire, Rothfuss already relays the image of a character whose actions are not rooted in simplistic heroic definitions, but varying and natural human emotions.

Having invited Ben to the troupe, Kvothe starts studying under Ben's tutelage. As expected, Ben fulfils the role of the wise old man by introducing Kvothe to the various sciences and sympathy – a form of magic – with Kvothe remarking: "Only now, far after the fact, do I recognize how carefully Ben prepared me for what was to come at the University"), directly acknowledging Ben's role (69). Additionally, this is where the reader is given their first look at Kvothe's power. As the son of an educated noblewoman and a talented trouper, Kvothe was raised "cunningly" and in "an enlightened atmosphere" of the troupe, and during his lessons with Ben it becomes clear that he possesses a prodigious mind (55, 88). During a conversation with Kvothe's parents, Ben highlights this: "It's not

just memorization though. He understands. Half the things I've been meaning to show him he's already figured out for himself" (87). Rather than having his power originate from something supernatural, Kvothe's intelligence – even if unimaginably large – serves to further connect the reader with the protagonist by having a honed human quality as the primary source of the hero's power. Furthermore, since Kvothe's power lies within a human quality, rather than a supernatural one, it is natural for there to be conflict on how he uses this power; for good or for evil. Seeing as the struggle between good and evil is part of the human condition, this setup expands the complexity of Kvothe's character. It should be noted, however, that this is not to say that supernatural elements are excluded from Kvothe's character or the narrative.

Having said goodbye to Ben, Kvothe continues to travel with his parents' troupe temporarily with the intention to attend to University later. However, for "singing entirely the wrong sort of songs", Kvothe's entire family is violently slaughtered (116). This is a common motif employed in fantasy literature (Alsford 55). The perpetrators, the mystery-veiled Chandrian, function as Campbell's heralds, terrifying and evil, forcing Kvothe to abandon the familiar sphere of life and accept the call to adventure.

As one would expect from a twelve-year-old boy, Kvothe is overcome by a state of deep shock. Refusing to recall the death of his troupe, he pushes the painful memories aside through sleep, blissful ignorance and by occupying his mind with nothing but survival, essentially putting his mind to sleep and becoming "more akin to a wild animal than a boy of twelve" (123, 127, 129). Eventually he ends up in the town of Tarbean and is forced beg and steal to survive. Kvothe likens Tarbean's size to the ocean with "[s]eas of people" and "roads wide as rivers" (132-133, 143). Given Kvothe's mental state and water related imagery of size, Tarbean can be seen as the belly of the whale that Campbell identifies, from which Kvothe must eventually escape to continue.

It is during his time in Tarbean that the reader is given their first impression of Kvothe's villainy. In revenge for destroying the last memento of his parents, Kvothe tails Pike – his enemy and fellow street rat – to his hideout and sets it ablaze with little care for what he destroys. However, Kvothe is left unsatisfied, and after getting beaten up by Pike again, he douses him in strong liquor and sets him on fire (171-172). Seeing as Kvothe has already described that he was more like an animal than

human during his time in Tarbean, this act of cruelty represents Kvothe's inner beast, the trigger for this scenario being "the pure, hard hatred of a child" towards Pike (172). While revenge is an understandable reason for these acts, they fall into the category of villainous characteristics without question.

Tarbean also contains numerous events that highlight Kvothe's humane character. For example, Kvothe decides to leave a young boy get beaten up and robbed to not reveal the location of his own hideout (167) and he also steals some coins from a helpful shopkeeper (198). What these two events share is the feeling of guilt that Kvothe experiences, the former being something that he regrets even in the present time:

*Chronicler^[3] frowned. "You said yourself that there was nothing you could have done."
"I could have, [...] and I didn't. I made my choice and I regret it to this day [...]" (168).*

These events show that while Kvothe performs acts that can be regarded as evil or twisted, he does not necessarily do them with a clear conscience. These actions are usually committed with an understandable reason, even if the moral nature of these actions is debatable. This is a central aspect of Kvothe's character: even if he had a reason to make a morally questionable choice, he does not necessarily become self-justified, but reflects his own actions and their consequences, even if they are accompanied by guilt. This is one of the key traits that create the impression of a humane character in Kvothe.

5.2 Initiation

Kvothe's mind is finally stirred from its slumber when he discovers that the Chandrian have enemies and decides to leave for the University, an event that signifies rebirth and the start of Campbell's initiation. Before leaving Tarbean, he stops by a shoemaker who offers him a pair of used shoes for free, but Kvothe, in turn, leaves some coins behind despite his own poverty:

Why? Because pride is a strange thing, and because generosity deserves generosity in return. But mostly because it felt like the right thing to do [...]" (208).

³ The character in question is constantly referred to as Chronicler without the definite article. The lack of the article in this paper is intentional.

Here we can directly see that Kvothe has his own undefined sense of right and wrong, but also that he is willing to ignore his own unfortunate circumstances to show gratitude towards those that help him, displaying a degree of compassion. On the other hand, this event also demonstrates Kvothe's personal pride, potentially foreshadowing a character of hubris, especially since the reader is already aware of how the story will end and seeing as how Kvothe remarks that that the one thing he is not willing to accept "is the folly of a willful pride", possibly implying that he knows what awaits at the end of a prideful road (94).

Now that the story has transited from departure to initiation, Kvothe must face the trials set before him. Ironically, the first two significant trials outline his villainous rather than heroic traits. During his admission interview, Kvothe admits to resorting to methods of unscholarly nature:

I knew from my previous discussions with Ben that you needed money or brains to get into the University. [...] So I was cheating (230).

The above quotation shows that in his desire to further his own goal, Kvothe is willing to act in a manner that bends the rules. As mentioned before, taking law into one's own hands is a key characteristic of villains and Kvothe's actions here demonstrate this.

Further on, intending to embarrass the overconfident student, Master Hemme has Kvothe hold a lecture on sympathy, unaware of Kvothe's talent. Out of spite, Kvothe makes a demonstration on sympathy during which he deliberately injures Hemme and makes passive-aggressive gestures to go even further (259-260). In other words, Kvothe resorts to using his powers to hurt someone who has insulted him. Here the reader is given an impression of a character who does not tolerate insults to his own pride. Additionally, this event demonstrates that Kvothe does not fill the heroic condition of not using one's power to hurt others in the face of abuse and aggression. In this case, he bears similarities to Frankenstein's monster; both react violently to abuse, but Kvothe does so out of pleasure and spite rather than being forced to do so.

However, Kvothe's time in the University is not highlighted just by villainous deeds, but also heroic ones, even if they are clichéd. During one of Kvothe's sessions in the Fishery, a container of volatile substance breaks apart and sets the workshop on fire, leaving Fela – one of Kvothe's female friends – in danger. As expected from the hero character, Kvothe manages to rescue the damsel in distress and

fulfil his role (446-450). Despite its clichéd nature, this occurrence nevertheless demonstrates that Kvothe is willing to put himself in harm's way to protect those closest to him, filling the criteria of empathy and self-sacrifice that heroes usually possess, which Kvothe himself aptly notes (453). However, perhaps the most significant aspect of Kvothe heroism, in this case, lies in the aftermath. Meeting Fela for the first time after the incident, Kvothe consoles his self-loathing friend, by noting how her hand is not that of a "swooning princess" but that "of a woman who would have made it through the fire on her own [...]" (462). Not only does this break, at least partly, the hopeless character of the damsel, but it also shows a deeper understanding of heroism on Kvothe's part; Kvothe demonstrates a degree of humility for his heroics, but he also alleviates the feeling of hopelessness that Fela expresses for becoming a stereotypical damsel, a role she admits she hates (461). As such, we can see that Kvothe cares deeply for his closest friends and seeks to understand and encourage them, showing that he possesses the "gentle heart."

Later, when Kvothe hears a rumour regarding the Chandrian and rides to the far-off village of Trebon to investigate, he encounters a drug-crazed dragon – an immensely large herbivorous lizard. Fearing for the safety of the village, Kvothe resorts to killing the beast (564). Here we can see a clear European perception of the dragon's significance that was common in medieval literature: since dragons were often biblically associated with "diabolical evil", El-Shamy argues "the conflict between the hero and the dragon symbolizes the conflict between life and death, good and evil, and right and wrong" (Garry and El-Shamy 73-74, qtd. in Garry and El-Shamy 74). Thus, it is apparent that this common motif of a dragon battle is employed nearly unaltered in *The Name of the Wind* to portray Kvothe as the heroic dragon slayer. Furthermore, the significance of this ordeal is highlighted by Kvothe when he mentions that it "was the first time I actually felt like any sort of hero. If you are looking for a reason for the man I would eventually become [...] look there" (597).

In the aftermath of the battle, Kvothe comes across a young girl who unknowingly reveals that the Chandrian were in Trebon, killing people for a similar reason they killed Kvothe's parents. Seeing that mere words cannot erase the young girl's fears, Kvothe gives her a dragon scale, which he enchants – a lie that the girl believes in her superstition (596). For the first time, we come across a scenario where the protagonist's cause is compassionate, but the means are questionable. Thus far, Kvothe's hero/villain character has been established by his numerous actions that have been either heroic or

villainous, but here, the distinction between right and wrong becomes blurred, since Kvothe's promise of protection is unfounded; the Chandrian could very well come back and kill the girl. The event highlights Kvothe's dual nature as a hero/villain character with its differing nature and drawing the protagonist into a moral grey area.

5.3 Return and other notable aspects

Having now reached the end of this chronological analysis – the end of the book – it is worth pointing out certain features that it excluded.

The narrative of the novel is a modified version of Campbell's hero cycle – the common structure of a hero's journey which can undergo significant alteration without losing its core elements. However, it can be argued that *The Name of the Wind* deviates from this three-stage structure by making the third stage, the hero's return or its rejection, impossible to fulfil; after all, Kvothe has no place to return. The reader knows where Kvothe's story will end – the Waystone Inn – and thus, it is based to claim that this is the case. Furthermore, this deviation is strengthened during an interlude:

“Think of all the stories you’ve heard [...] You have a young boy, the hero. His parents are killed. He sets out for vengeance. What happens next?”

“He finds help. [...] An old drunken swordsman. A mad hermit in the woods.”

“Exactly! [...] We know how it ends practically before it starts” (303-304).

Here we see Kvothe reiterate parts of Campbell's hero cycle, having just before stated that he “wasn't living in a story”, thus making his remarks ironic (303). Thus, Kvothe alienates his life story from the predictable make-believe tales told about him, metaphorically rejecting parts of the conventional hero adventure. However, he also concedes that such tales “hold a shred of truth, because I did find something very near to the mad hermit in the woods”, showing that his story is a synthesis of elements drawn from old hero tales and realist characters (304).

Finally, it is important to note how the book is structured in terms of *fabula* and *syuzhet*. As demonstrated in this analysis, Kvothe is portrayed as more of a heroic than a villainous character in his chronologically structured story. However, the story is interrupted multiple times using interludes, during which the reader is given insight into the current state of the world. It is during these

interludes that the reader is given a foreboding impression of what is to come. In addition, these interludes serve to strengthen the reader's sense of Kvothe's villainy as well as foreshadowing his upcoming morally questionable choices. During his first meeting with Chronicler, Kvothe makes an indirect threat to kill him in response to Chronicler's suggestion to come back later:

Kote gave Chronicler a look of profound disdain. "What gives you the slightest impression that I would be here when you came back [...] For that matter, what makes you think you're free to simply walk out of here, knowing what you know?"
Chronicler went very still. "Are—" [...] Are you saying that—" (48)

Later, when a demon is fended off in Kvothe's inn and the demon's motive for attacking is hypothesized, Kvothe admits his responsibility for the current state of the world:

"Reshi [...] This isn't your fault"
Kvothe gave his student a long, weary look. "You know better than that, Bast. All of this is my fault. The scrael, the war. All my fault." (637)

These two examples demonstrate the contradiction between the part of Kvothe's story that is revealed during the narrative and what awaits at the end of that tale. While villainy receives some strong hints during Kvothe's story, his portrayal remains mostly heroic, but during the interludes the reader is given an impression of a hero turned fearful and guilty. This contrast is created by using both *fabula* and *syuzhet* in a manner that creates a veil of mystery around Kvothe's character. The reader is aware of the end-result of Kvothe's adventures, but the events and circumstances that led to the present are not mentioned in the interludes, leaving the reader with a strong sense of intrigue: what could he have done to change the world so drastically?

6. Conclusion

As the analysis demonstrates, Patrick Rothfuss has constructed a protagonist that is not distinctively good or evil, even though *The Name of the Wind* adheres to the first two stages of Joseph Campbell's proposed structure of a heroic journey. While Kvothe's heroic deeds are predominant in *The Name of*

the Wind, the reader is given several occasions where villainy, implied or apparent, undermines Kvothe's heroic character. Both aspects of the protagonist's persona become evident through his actions; agency that reveals the traits of the agent and the appropriate use of *fabula* and *syuzhet*. Furthermore, the three requirements of a realistic character, as proposed by Bennet and Royle, are all fulfilled: Kvothe has a valid name, he speaks and acts in a way that coheres to real life, but most importantly, he is given a remarkable degree of complexity through the possession of the opposite traits of hero and villain. Despite the contradicting nature of these two archetypal characters, they form a compelling, coherent entity in the character of Kvothe. Throughout the novel, the protagonist's actions stem from multiple human impulses, such as survival, pride, contempt, empathy and compassion. Thus, it can be concluded that the given protagonist transcends simplistic binary distinctions between hero and villain by possessing traits from both characters and employing them in a manner that is both coherent and based around natural human impulses.

Due to the brevity of this assignment, it is impossible to cover the topics presented in the first part thoroughly, and hence, they are only discussed in length that is appropriate for the thesis. This is a necessary step in order to guarantee that a sufficient character analysis is presented in the second part. However, the discussed topics should be explored more deeply in future assignments. In addition, the novel that this assignment focuses on is only the first of three that the *Kingkiller Chronicle* consists of. The reason for using just one novel is the fact that the trilogy is incomplete with the third book still a work in progress. While an analysis consisting of the first two parts of the trilogy was a possibility, it would not do justice to either of these books to analyse both in this brief assignment, and thus, it is better to look at one of them as a whole. It is my intention to analyse the entire trilogy further on in my studies.

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