



## Abstract

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*Der Goldene Kompass* und *Harry Potter* sind vermutlich nicht die ersten literarischen Werke, welche bei dem Stichwort „Altern“ sofort in den Sinn kommen, auch wenn die an Merlin oder Gandalf erinnernde Gestalt Albus Dumbledores sich durchaus eines zweiten Blickes würdig erweist. In westlichen Gesellschaften wird Alter vorrangig in Verbindung mit einem alten, defizitären Körper gesehen, welcher ein weitaus jüngeres und oft unveränderliches Ich verbirgt. Jedoch haben Gerontologen, vor allem in den achtziger und neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts eben jene Blickweisen aufgebrochen und schrittweise versucht zu ändern, sodass die biomedizinische Perspektive durch eine kulturell-soziale Komponente erweitert wurde. Die in dieser Arbeit analysierten und interpretierten Buchreihen bieten eine Vielzahl an unterschiedlichen Blickwinkeln auf das Thema Altern; sowohl in Form einer körperlosen Alterserscheinung, in Form eines stark verlangsamten Alterns oder aber in Form verschiedener Rollen, welche alternde Charaktere aushandeln und neu verorten. Dennoch, auch wenn es sich um einen stetigen aber langsamen Wandel negativer Altersbilder handelt, fallen beide Buchreihen des Öfteren auf genau diese Altersbilder zurück, sodass am Ende nur zu bemerken ist, dass neue Anknüpfungspunkte zwar geschaffen, aber oft nicht weiter verfolgt werden.

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## List of Abbreviations

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|                 |                                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>cf.</b>      | confer, compare                   |
| <b>e. g.</b>    | for example                       |
| <b>ibid.</b>    | ibidem, in the same place         |
| <b>i. e.</b>    | that means                        |
| <b>N.E.W.T.</b> | Nastily Exhausting Wizarding Test |
| <b>O.W.L.</b>   | Ordinary Wizarding Level          |
| <b>qdt.</b>     | quoted in                         |
| <b>UK</b>       | United Kingdom                    |
| <b>US</b>       | United States (of America)        |
| <b>WEA</b>      | Wizarding Examinations Authority  |
| <b>YA</b>       | Young Adult                       |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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In *Identities – Race, Class, Gender and Nationality*, Eduardo Mendieta proclaims, that “age has become less important to a very small population in the world: namely, those populations within the developed and industrial nations of the geographical north of the planet” (413), implying that age seems to be a problem solely in those societies outside “the developed and industrial nations of the geographical north”. He, then, proceeds to describe the emergence of a cultural marketplace for all ages, in which “middle-aged persons are enjoying the same kinds of music and participating in the same kinds of cultural icons that teenagers are consuming and referring to in their own identity constructions” (413), thus painting an image of a society that has succeeded in bridging the gulf between the generations. This description of an idealised image of an all-inclusive culture in which age has been relegated to an afterthought, however, is in itself, if not contradictory, then certainly problematic. In his statement, it is the age cohorts of youth/adolescence and middle age which have, seemingly, found a common ground. The fringe cohorts of childhood and old age, however, are very much absent from the equation. This, in turn, leads to the question, whether age has truly ceased to be a problem, or whether Mendieta’s view is a somewhat romanticised and utopian one.

Looking at a small selection of headlines used by *The Guardian* of the last years suggests the latter: “Can we reverse the ageing process by putting young blood into older people?” (2015); “Scientists to ‘reset’ blood proteins in attempt to slow ageing process” (2016); “20 reasons to be cheerful in middle age”; “Big Unknowns: can we stop ageing?” (2016); “Ageing process may be reversible, scientists claim” (2015); “Are you worried about our ageing global population? Share your thoughts” (2016); “Avoid stress, be useful: 90-year-olds on how to have a long, happy life” (2016); “Population: the future is caring” (2016) as well as the headline of a nine part series on “The new retirement: how an ageing population is transforming Britain” (2016). Unknown, slow down, stop, reverse, care, transform – these notions seem to be intertwined with the ageing process, echoing society’s perception of age as a biological and medical process of decline ending in some form of dependency, which people seem to view with trepidation, but which might just be stopped, or at least slowed down, by the vague suggestion of graceful ageing or a healthy lifestyle. In the end, nothing seems to be more expected than age, and yet nothing is more unforeseen (cf. de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age 4*). The “new land” of (old) age, the “foreign country with an unknown language” (Blaikie, *Ageing in Popular Culture* 1), a “subject of intense personal reflection and widespread public debate” (Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures of Ageing – Self, Citizen*

and the Body 1), is “primarily understood in its relation to its corporeality” (Tulle-Winton, ‘Old Bodies’ 65), an inevitable physical and mental decline which, sooner or later, will happen to everyone, entailing the loss of former social roles, status and agency (cf. Wangler, ‘Representation of Age in Media’ 114; Featherstone and Wernick *Images of Ageing - Cultural Representations of later Life* 1; de Beauvoir 2).

However, there is hope. With the life expectancy rates on the rise and the birth rates declining in the West<sup>1</sup>, our societies are ageing (cf. WHO, World Bank; Vincent, *Inequality* 21). This results in a renewed interest in what it means to age into old age, as the time spent after retirement, and thus the time spent as being labelled old, increases. This spark of relevance, which has gained momentum in the past few years, finds, according to Estes et al. as well as Blaikie, expression in the emergence of critical gerontology in the late eighties and early nineties (cf. Estes et al. 2), a field that seeks to go beyond “everyday appearances and the unreflective acceptance of established positions” (Estes et al., *Social Theory, Social Policy and Ageing* 3), and by challenging traditional perspectives in popular culture (cf. Blaikie 98). Attitudes, questions, and images of ageing have been discussed, dissected, defied, renegotiated but most importantly centralised in popular culture, the media and in academia. Even though the biomedical perspective as well as the narrative of dependency, decline, and death persist, they have been challenged by the notion that we might be, in fact, just as much aged by culture as by nature (cf. Guellette, *Aged by Culture* 12) and this dependency is not necessarily inevitable.

Recently, TV series such as Netflix’s *Grace and Frankie* (2016), ITV’s *Vicious* (2013 – 2016), Amazon’s *Transparent* (2014 – 2016), and BBC’s *Last Tango in Halifax* (2012 –), have explored the otherness of ageing, its problems and possibilities, by focussing on exclusively aged characters, who refuse to sink into a passive, detached and calm lifestyle after retirement, and thus “abandon [existing] models of age-appropriate behaviour and experience” (Woodward qtd. in Óro-Piqueras and Wohlmann, *Serializing Age - Ageing and Old Age in TV Series* 15). In providing “an open-ended, ever-evolving space for middle-aged and older [...] characters to explore economic power, desire and sexuality” (Fiske qtd. in Óro-Piqueras and Wohlmann 12), texts<sup>2</sup> in popular culture serve a double function, as they become a commentary on, a satire of or, indeed, a counterpoint to real life (cf. Hunt, *Alternative Worlds* 8), providing their recipients with alternatives to prevailing views, and similarly incorporate and broadcast rendered perspectives existing in society. In this setting, literature, too, serves as “a space for play” (Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* xiv), which, as Derrida

<sup>1</sup> The average life expectancy in the United Kingdom rose from 71 years in 1960 to 81 years in 2014, while the fertility rates fell from 2.7 to 1.8 births per woman, both mirroring a world wide trend (cf. Global Health Organisation, ‘Life Expectancy’). A study in the *Lancet* medical journal estimated that by 2030 the average life expectancy at birth will exceed 85 years in 35 developed countries, with South Korea reaching the highest number with approximately 90 years for women and 86.7 years for both sexes, while the UK’s rates will most likely rise to 85.2 years for both sexes (cf. Kontis et. al. 4ff).

<sup>2</sup> In this instance the term *text* exceeds its common definition of written words on paper, of a “raw material [...] from which certain forms (e. g. of narrative, ideological problematic, mode of address, subject position, etc.) may be abstracted [...]” (Johnson qtd. in Storey, *What is Cultural Studies? A Reader* 2). Instead, the term shall be extended to include the positions proposed by John Frow and Meaghan Morris, who state, that a text “involves practices, institutional structures and the complex forms of agency they entail, legal, political, and financial conditions of existence, and particular flows of power and knowledge, as well as a particular multi-layered semantic organisation; it is an ontologically mixed entity” (qtd. in Storey 2).

states in *For What Tomorrow?* possesses the power to transform public space (127). Literature, thus, is able to provide society with images with which to think (cf. Hamilton qtd. in Danowski and Robinson, *The Portrayal of Older Characters in Popular Children's Picture Books in the US* 335).

Issues of ageing have been discussed in literature. For instance, Julian Barnes pointed out the unreliability of memory in later life in *Sense of an Ending* (2011, released as a movie in 2017); Philip Roth explored sexuality and the fear of decline and death in *The Dying Animal* (2001, film release in 2008); Alan Bennett's stories, such as *The Lady in the Van* (1989, released as a movie in 2015), *The Uncommon Reader* (2007) or *Smut: Two Unseemly Stories* (2011) revolve around stagnating relationships, questions of care, romance, reminiscence and finding one's place in later life. These works prominently feature aged characters whose inner landscapes are revealed to the reader in much detail. However, the number of such works, even if it is increasing, remains not only comparatively small but also exclusively focussed on a very specific audience, namely those approaching or having reached later life stages. However fruitful in exploring the relationship between self, age, and other social actors from the vantage point of older characters, these novels might either simply reveal conscious attempts to counter or avoid negative stereotypes, or it might even serve to confirm and replicate society's ageist attitudes (cf. McGuire, 'Promoting Positive Attitudes toward Ageing: Literature for Young Children' 204). Attitudes towards ageing, as well as ageism permeating our society (cf. Sijuwade, 'Attitudes towards Old Age: A Study of the Self-Image of the Aged' 2), yet "appea[r] in the literature in subtle ways and [are] often not an intentional message" (McGuire 204). As literature is one medium that "reflects attitudes, values, and ideals of a culture" (Charles, 'Literary Old Age: A Browse through History' 238) and helps to transmit them it might be more conducive to look towards works of fiction which do not foreground a deliberate examination of age per se but in which these attitudes, values, and ideals are being dealt with in a more unobtrusive and possibly unreflected manner.

In order to examine these attitudes and their, possibly, changing nature, these works of fiction have to fulfil a few requirements. Firstly, in order to be able to transmit notions of ageing to a preferably large audience, they need to be equally accessible for young adults, people in middle-age and those approaching later life stages as well as be able to bridge culture specific borders by the help of translation and, further, still by using motifs and conventions understood by most people. Secondly, in order to analyse whether there has been a change in the perception of age, the novels should have been written between 1990 and the present day, preferably as a series, as to capture the zeitgeist of the period of change mentioned above. Thirdly, and connected to the previous point, the texts should have enjoyed financial and cultural success. Whereas the former point seems easily explained, simply by looking at sales numbers and the financial success of, for instance, movie releases, it is the second part that is less easily defined. Cultural success, in this case, centres around the question whether the novel has been given serious consideration of social, political and cultural issues within academia, whether it has been adapted as a movie or theatre play and whether it has formed, what Benedict Anderson (cf. *Imagined Communities* 5-6) coined in terms of a nation, an imagined community of readers that is interactive and global. In this organised, interpretative community of readers, also

called a fandom, “[r]eaders [...] use cyberspace to construct websites, role-playing games, blogs, and fanfictions” (Cantrell, *When Worlds Collide: Heterotopias in Fantasy Fiction for Young Adult Readers in France and Britain* 30) which uses symbols, gestures, mannerisms, and other reminding objects that are stable and situation transcendent in order to construct a cohesive group with its own identities. The community is imagined because readers “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6). Notably, this latter point hints at two genres of fiction that seem to be tailor-made to fulfil these requirements: science fiction and fantasy literature. The genre of science fiction is fundamentally exploratory in character, the science-fiction writer tries to create the wholly new, while the fantasy fiction writer tries to re-create issues of and comment on the real world (cf. Manlove, ‘On the nature of fantasy’ 30-31). Thus, by being related to the real world and by recreating, dissecting and rendering the values, attitudes and ideals of a culture in an alternative world – in short, by functioning as a mirror to reality – it is fantasy literature, with its multiple, large fandoms, that seems suitable for further analysis.

In 2003 the BBC’s Big Read set out to search for Britain’s best-loved novel (cf. BBC, *BBC News*). Among the top ten novels voted, four belonged to the genre of fantasy literature as well as young-adult novels<sup>3</sup>, and one to the genre of science fiction<sup>4</sup>. Even though there seems to be a connection between young adult novels and fantasy literature, which may be attributed to the latter’s preference of a youthful hero on a quest (cf. Thompson, ‘Finding a Place on the Literary Map’ 37) and the resulting preconception of a certain childishness, the term young adult novel is not well-defined enough to possess “borders that prevent older people from indulging in such literature” (Zipes, ‘Why Fantasy matters too much’ 5). Most notably, both Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and Rowling’s *Harry Potter* seem to possess an allure which draws large numbers of readers of all ages and backgrounds<sup>5</sup>. In comparison, Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* draws a smaller but similarly diverse readership. Yet, returning to the requirements stated above, it is the *Harry Potter* series and *His Dark Materials* which are most suited for further analysis as they have been considered academically, have been written between 1997 to 2007 and 1995 to 2003 respectively and have acquired a large number of readers across all ages and backgrounds, which in turn form previously mentioned imagined communities. Furthermore, both series, although having been officially completed, continue in various forms to this very day. Thus, the original *Harry Potter* series of seven books has been complemented by three additional books, nine movies (2001 – 2016), eight video games, one theatre play in 2016 and the website *Pottermore* (2011) which continues, explains and expands the world of *Harry Potter*. The *Harry Potter* brand has, over the years, grown into the biggest children’s publishing and merchandising phenomenon of modern times

**3** Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*-Trilogy, Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

**4** Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*

**5** Even though sales numbers are not necessarily a reliable or accurate indicator, both series have sold more than 150 million copies worldwide, with *Harry Potter* having sold approximately 500 million copies (cf. Wagner, ‘Tolkien Proves He’s Still the King’; ‘Top-selling books by ranking’).

(cf. Heilman, *Critical Perspectives* 1). In comparison, Philip Pullman's trilogy is more understated and has not reached the same status as the *Potter* series. Still, the series has brought forth two additional books, *Lyras Oxford* and *Once upon a time in the North*, a stage version and a radio drama of the trilogy as well as a movie version of its first instalment, *The Golden Compass* (2007). In 2017, Pullman also announced the production of a TV series, as well as an equal to *His Dark Materials*, a complementary narrative that will shift sideways, spanning the time before, during and after the original series (cf. Lawson, 'Book of Dust' par. 1). Both series, while they have been praised by many for offering a complex, "adventure-packed story that speaks to some of the most urgent dilemmas of our time and suggests, for the thoughtful reader, not answers to the ills that presently beset us but rather ways of meeting them [...]" (Lenz, *His Dark Materials Illuminated* 1) and for being "cross-age classic[s] [...] in both adult and juvenile categories" (ibid.), found themselves shrouded in controversy as Rowling has been accused of commodifying childhood, of using simple, uninventive tropes, and of encouraging its readers to passively accept the inequalities in their world (cf. Cantrell 79). On the other hand, Pullman's work has been partly censored, attacked for its strong criticism of organised religion, denounced as propaganda, and accused of replicating simple binaries (cf. Lenz 1; Wells par. 4,5).

On an academic level, both series have been explored by several scholars in terms of social, political and cultural issues, with recurring topics being 'race', 'power', 'knowledge', 'war', 'terror', 'resistance', 'science', 'technology', 'theology', and 'ecology', questions of good and evil, morality, identity, and human rights. In doing so they support the notion that "children's literature should be about grown-up things" (Lenz 2). A close reading of these series in terms of attitudes towards old age and ageing, however, have not been carried out yet. Some research has been done in terms of various Jungian archetypes used in both series, briefly touching upon old age but never going further than pointing out an old character. If age was at the centre of research, then it is the age of the young heroes, their innocence, their nature and their psychological well-being that is in focus. Hence, this thesis will shift the focus, turning towards the other characters within the series, often looking through the eyes of these young heroes upon older characters – which, in itself, is not unproblematic, as chapter three will show –, seeking to analyse the concept of old age as well as answering questions concerning the construction and deconstruction of said concept. Leading questions, which shall be addressed, are as follows: How is age constructed within the series? Are contemporary, stereotypical notions of age upheld or deconstructed? Does the series provide alternatives to common assumptions of ageing? Are the series ageist in outlook or do they propose positive images of ageing?

In order to address the questions stated above, this thesis will be separated into two parts. The first part deals with the terminology and the theoretical framework addressing the term 'identity' first and foremost, as a brief definition seems vital for the concept of age, both on a personal and a social level. Age, then, shall be traced along the lines of its pathology first as this seems to be the prevailing, although changing, image within society. This first point will be underlined with the help of Goffman's theory of stigma, which, as a social marker, structures our interactions with older characters, resulting in an unequal relation between youth, middle-age and old age. Questions of power, although important,

shall only briefly be touched upon. Furthermore, the chapter will also deal with prevailing stereotypes and their influence upon the enactment of age in a performative sense.

The second part of the thesis addresses questions of literature and genre. It will draw upon the previous chapter, focussing on the two-way relationship of literature and society, as well as on genre conventions and the genre, its advantages and disadvantages. Fantasy literature, in this part, will be defined as a mirror, or as Michel Foucault proposed, a heterotopia, that enables readers and writers alike to use the opening space for a negotiation of social, political and cultural issues. Following this deductive overall structure, chapter three will then feature an analysis of the primary texts *His Dark Materials* and *Harry Potter* in reference to the theoretical framework provided in chapter two. For each series different categories will be drawn up, of which, in each case, at least two characters will be described, analysed and interpreted according to the question posed above. These interpretations will, in the last part of chapter three, be briefly compared to each other along the lines of the stereotypes used, how the characters are described, which social functions they occupy and which characters propose different departures from common categories.

## 2 OF LIMITED FUTURES AND FROZEN PASTS

### Identity, Age and Literature

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Before delving into the complex concept of age and ageing, the latter being the specific process of ageing through the life course whereas the former is used synonymously with the term old age, and in order to understand the processes that constitute age both as an individual as well as a social category, a look at the process of constructing identities seems worthwhile. Identity, in its connection to questions of difference between individuals and groups, along with matters of stereotyping will, in part, lay the foundation for this thesis.

#### 2.1 Knowing me, Knowing you: Theoretical Approaches to the Construction of Identity

Generally, identity, both on an individual and collective level, can be defined as having to “do with the imagined sameness of a person or of a social group at all times and in all circumstances; about a person or a group being, and being able to continue to be, itself and not someone or something else” (Robbins, ‘Identity’ 172). It centres “on the assertion of principles of unity, as opposed to pluralism and diversity, and of continuity, as opposed to change and transformation” (Robbins 172). Within this definition, Robbins already hints at the two prevailing approaches to the matter of identity: an essentialist approach, that highlights unity and continuity, and a non-essential approach, which foregrounds plurality and transformation.

Stuart Hall, in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, defines three ways of looking at identity, which can be grouped under these two contrasting approaches. Attributed to the essentialist construction of identity, which presumes one fixed, unchanging, clear and authentic set of characteristics (cf. Woodward, *Identity and Difference* 11), is the so called Enlightenment subject. This describes a subject that is a “fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness, and action, whose ‘centre’ consisted of an inner core” (Hall 597). Similarly, the sociological subject is endowed with a stable inner core of identity, but one that is constructed in relation to “‘significant others’, who mediate the values, meanings, and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabit[s]” (597) to the individual, thus, focussing on an interactive and productive aspect of identity construction. Hall stresses that through the repeated performance of cultural identities the inner core is modified and the individual becomes a part of the social structure which it inhabits, thus stabilising both the structure and itself (cf. Hall 598). In this particular case, individuals

might “see themselves as one and the same person over the course of their lives, while still retaining a sense in which they are differently positioned at different times and in different places according to the different social roles [they] are playing” (Woodward 22). However, it is questionable whether the essential and time transcendental inner core, which provides the subject with stability, can truly prevail in a world in which identity and stability are increasingly threatened (cf. Robbins 175). It needs to be noted that the notion of each subject possessing an unchanging character as well as something stable that undoubtedly constitutes the ‘I’ is, because of its comparatively long tradition, an understanding of self still abound in society, as individuals in what Anthony Giddens has referred to as the “reflexive project of self” (*Modernity and Self-Identity* 53), often embark on quests to ‘find themselves’, to ‘seek their inner self’, to ‘be their true selves’.

On the other end of the spectrum, and firmly grounded in a non-essential approach that centres on the assumption that, in an increasingly globalised and culturally fragmented world, identity can be constructed from multiple centres (cf. Woodward 14), lies the post-modern subject. This subject is set apart from its predecessors by having no discernible stable core but rather a fragmented one. Identity in this case “is formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (Hall 598). The subject “assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self’. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about” (Hall in Robbins 175). Woodward and Hall echo Bauman, who stated that “the postmodern problem of identity is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open [...] the catchword of postmodernity [being] recycling” (Bauman in Woodward 36), as they see an explanation for this fragmentation in the multiplicity of discourses that construct subject positions from which the subject is able to speak and in which the subject is able to position itself (cf. Woodward 14). Even though this vast multiplicity from which subject positions may be produced allows individuals to alter their identities, albeit on a basis of inadequate self-knowledge and within the constraints of the social structures they move in (cf. Parekh 252), it is not without potential problems. Simon Biggs echoing Kenneth Gergen in ‘Age, gender, narratives, and masquerades’ cautions that in a postmodern surrounding “the self may become overwhelmed, inner space so filled with alternatives that sense of distinct identity may be lost altogether” (51). Taking into account that too much choice, plurality, and fluidity might be detrimental to the construction of identity, Robbins’ notion that identity has to do with an imagined sameness which provides the subject with an inner coherence seems reasonable. Thus, identity does not, per se, need a stable, time transcendent inner core but it needs the perception, the fiction of having stability, as well as, at the same time, the feeling of being positioned differently at different points in time in order to be meaningfully constructed.

These two contrasting approaches, even though they might be seen as fundamentally different, do provide three pivotal ideas about the construction of identity. Firstly, identity involves a precarious balance of fluidity, meaning the “degree to which identity is changeable, a subject of choice and desire but also of uncertainty”, and stability, “the degree to which identity is fixed and unchanging”

(Estes et al., *Social Theory* 26–28). Secondly, identity is first and foremost a “process of production, never complete [...]” (Hall in Woodward 51), that involves an interplay between the fiction of an inner sameness and social roles provided by multiple discourses, in which the subject is positioned. Thirdly, identity involves a form of representation, that is language, symbolic systems, rituals and practices, as well as continuous reiteration and performance in order to be meaningful (cf. Assmann, *Einführung in die Kulturwissenschaft* 221; Woodward, *Understanding Identity* 100). Yet, the ideas introduced above only hint at the processes by which subjects and identities are produced.

### 2.1.1 Why Difference Matters

First and foremost, the construction and production of identity is dependent on a classificatory system in which different places are assigned. Meaning is created through this designation of often binary positions and the dialogue, the communication and exchange of ideas, concepts, and signs (cf. Durkheim in Woodward, *Difference* 29; Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* 235, 238). This other, on which the construction of identity depends, serves multiple purposes: first, it is the Other by which an individual or a group is recognised and accepted, and secondly, the Other signifies not only a different and opposed place in a classificatory system from which we are dissociated by symbolic and clear cut borders, but moreover it serves as a focal point and point of comparison for ourselves. This comparison goes hand in hand with ideas and processes of

separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions [which] have their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, for and against, that a semblance of order is created (Douglas in Woodward 33).

In addition to the Other, consciously and unconsciously, identity depends upon what George Herbert Mead has termed “a generalised Other” (Mead, ‘The Self’ 36) or what Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 80s coined as the in-group, when they describe a group as

a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it (Tajfel and Robinson, *Social groups and identities: Developing the legacy of Henri Tajfel* 30).

In-groups, of which there are various ones on micro, meso and macro levels of society, the smallest being the family unit, provide individuals with attitudes and structures to think and to express themselves (cf. Mead 36). Nations, as well as race, gender, class, and age may be defined as in-groups. Each of these in-groups provides the individual with a set of social expectations and constraints, which ensure inclusion within the group, while transgressions might very well be punished by exclusion, segregation and marginalisation. Douglas’ second point, that order can only be created if the differences between the *within*, which is a heterogeneous group with pre-defined common features, and the *without* are exaggerated, simplified and if the *without* is being homogenised (cf. Douglas in Woodward 33; Hettlage, ‘European Identity – between Inclusion and Exclusion’ 246). This ties in with a

process commonly referred to as stereotyping or 'Othering'. This process portrays the Other as inferior to one's own, often glorified, group and "[p]articularly in times of crises, the significant Other becomes activated [...], since the binary construction of 'us' versus 'them' helps in overcoming the crises by, for instance, using blaming and scapegoating strategies" (Karolewski and Suszycki, *Citizenship and Collective Identity in Europe* 39). Furthermore, stereotypes, both, of our own group (auto-stereotypes) and of others (hetero-stereotypes), reduce the data individuals have to process in their daily lives, showing that the "human mind must think with the aid of categories. Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgement. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends on it" (Allport in Fiske and Cuddy, 'Doddering but Dear: Process, Content, and Function in Stereotyping of Older Persons' 5). This does not assume that stereotypes, which are "cognitive structures that store our beliefs and expectations about the characteristics of members of social groups" (Fiske and Cuddy 4) are correct representations of groups and individuals, as they use simplified and exaggerated images to create difference. Yet, it does imply that a shared consensus exists of what these key elements are. However, "[a]ccurate or not, stereotypes guide our social behaviour [and interactions] and often govern what information we seek, heed, and remember" (Fiske and Cuddy 4). Fiske and Cuddy note that employing stereotypes serves the social goals of belonging, self-enhancement and control (cf. 15-16). These images, "that have existed since the remotest times" (Jung, *Collected Works Vol.9* 5) are, furthermore, "exteriorised, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent: they may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another" (Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory' 111), which does not exempt them from changing throughout the years or being abandoned at some point (cf. Junkerjürgen, 'Dumb Blonde').

Yet, employing simplified, negative, homogeneous images in order to describe another group also creates a dichotomy - or imbalance - between the groups. Jaques Derrida notes that "power operates between the two terms involved in any binary position in such way that there is a necessary imbalance of power between the two" (Derrida in Woodward, *Difference* 36). Thus, one of the groups within this classificatory system is usually more powerful than the other which enables the group to define what is excluded and what is included (Woodward 15). Deviant groups, or their identities, are, thus, "denied achievement, pleasure and respect" (ibid. 23). Usually, the social dominance, or hegemony, as Antonio Gramsci termed it, of one group is won by struggle with another group, which does not mean that it is imposed from above. Rather, it is a process of negotiation between dominant and subordinate groups which is marked by resistance and incorporation and in which the dominant group does not merely rule another group but leads it "by intellectual and moral leadership" (Gramsci in Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* 83). Moreover, the dominance of a group needs to be maintained and accepted, consciously and unconsciously, by others which points to the fact that social dominance and, by extent, hegemony need both coercion and consent to be established and maintained.

### 2.1.2 Of Discourses and Performances

If difference is established between an in-group and an out-group and if the individual is part of a group, the subject is simultaneously provided with various discourses which produce subject positions, or social positions, into which the individual might be recruited or which the individual may choose to take up. These positions in turn need to be performed repeatedly by the individuals, and can, therefore, be regarded as social roles. As mentioned, groups within society retain various ideas, values, attitudes and images about themselves, their own identity, and those of others. Furthermore, some groups might be more salient and powerful than others. In the first part of chapter two the term discourse has already been mentioned, both explicitly by Woodward and implicitly by Hall. What Hall has described as “contradictory identities, pulling in different directions” (175), can, in fact, be seen as various subject positions arising from multiple discourses, the latter one being “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i. e., a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power’ 201). Moreover, Michel Foucault, whom Hall echoes above, argues that discourses are practices which are not only simultaneously and systematically constructing and defining the topic or object they represent but also governing the way how the topic may meaningfully be talked about (cf. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* 49). Subjects, in this respect, are not only “produced through and within discourses, and within specific discursive formations” (Hall in Woodward 10), the latter one being “several statements working together, fitting together because any statement implies a relation to all the others” (Hall, “The West and the Rest’ 201), but the subjects themselves produce the discourses. Yet, in order to do so the individual has to have taken position in a discourse which provide the subject with meaning that is only discernible from within the discourse. Discourses, therefore, as John Storey has formulated, enable, constrain and constitute (cf. Storey 133) objects as well as subjects.

Yet, Woodward and Montgomery offer a second term which describes ideas and values characteristic of a particular social group, which helps to legitimate and serve a dominant political and social power: ideology, a “set of beliefs, ideas and customs that guide a nation, region, community, institution or family unit” (Montgomery, ‘Breaking Binary Constructs’ 10). Louis Althusser states that a society must reproduce both its conditions of production as well as the ideological conditions for its continuance, in particular the belief in private property, a class system, and the importance of consumption, by the help of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) (cf. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 171 - 173). It is these beliefs, the ruling ideas, (re-)produced by ISAs, which serve the interests of the ruling class and which ultimately legitimate social power. Ideology, moreover, seems natural or, as he puts it, obvious. An “obviousness, which we cannot fail to recognise and before which we have made the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out [...]: ‘—That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!’” (172) and which operates on a subconscious level. The subject within ideology is recruited or hailed into subject positions by a process called interpellation during which it recognises itself (cf.

Woodward 42; Althusser 171). Ideology, in this respect, functions similarly to the practice of discourse as individuals are also shaped by various levels of ideology (cf. Montgomery 10).

Both terms, discourse and ideology, eventually result in and maintain the hegemonic power of one group over the other through a combination of coercion and consent. Similarly, discourses and ideologies seem natural and obvious, influence subjects on unconscious and conscious levels, and provide subjects with structures with which to think. Furthermore, both terms are neither simply negative nor are they entirely positive but they produce reality and “domains of objects and rituals of truth” (cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 194). Their similarities seem to be so substantial, that the two terms are sometimes, unthinkingly so, used interchangeably. Why, then, use the term discourse instead of ideology?

After careful consideration, and while ideology can be seen as a subtext for discourses (cf. van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* 9), Althusser’s theory includes points of contention which can be deemed as incongruous, thus leading to a rejection of this theory. First of all, the intertwined repressive and ideological state apparatuses, which, as Althusser mentions, can scarcely be separated (cf. 174), foreground the repressive, coercive character of both apparatuses. This implies a rather binary opposition, a restriction to a focus on repressive and repressed groups. Secondly, as Foucault reasons, “ideology is based on a distinction between true statements about the world (science) and false statements (ideology), and the belief that the facts about the world help us to decide between true and false statements” (Hall, ‘West and the Rest’ 203), which he deems an impossible feat. Power, which is the result of and the driving force behind ideology and discourse and can be exercised from many different points, is a network of social relations, – thus, rejecting the notion of binary oppositions, while foregrounding multiple centres of power – the comparatively rigid structures of ideology tied to a superstructure, as provided by Althusser’s theory, cannot fully or appropriately grasp the multifaceted nature of reality (cf. Althusser 171-174; Foucault, *Discipline* 208). In comparison, Foucault’s theory centres around the double function of a discourse which ventures beyond the one-way reproduction and transmission of beliefs and instead proposes that discourses produce knowledge of objects and subjects and are in turn produced by them (Foucault, *Knowledge* 49), instead of simply passively influencing them. Thus, discourses are active and interactive as well as open, drawing on other “discourses and binding them into [...] networks of meanings” (Hall 202). Finally, as Foucault notes, “statements about the social, political, or moral world are rarely ever simply true or false; and ‘the facts’ do not enable us to decide definitively about their truth or falsehood, partly because ‘facts’ can be construed in different ways” (Hall 202-203). Here again, discourse seems to be more ambivalent but also more open to describe social realities.

In terms of the construction of identities, discourses as centres for the production of subject positions which individuals may or may not take up, can take up the mantle of ideologies and feel obvious and natural whereas other discourses might be easily recognised as social constructions. However, both provide social actors with various social roles, and scripts in the form of expectations, and rules of conduct – some necessarily performed to avoid punishment, some willingly performed,

and some unknowingly performed. The perception of individuals as social actors who do perform an idealised version of themselves in multiple situations in every day life in front of an audience (Goffman 35, 48, 252) is a notion observed and developed by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. He presupposes a form of a stable inner core of identity, or at least a true character, as he notes that

[o]ne of the most interesting times to observe impression management is the moment when a performer leaves the back region and enters the place where the audience is to be found, or when he returns therefrom, for at these moments one can detect a wonderful putting on and taking off of character (Goffman 121).

Yet, he does not clarify whether this true character, which can only be shown by the separation between front and back stage, is imagined, as proposed above, or truly stable. The backstage is unseen by the audience, therefore allowing the individual to be him- or herself and showing a discrepancy between inner reality and appearance, while the front stage describes the direct interaction with others (cf. Goffman 118–125). Even though each role includes its own set of expectations and regulations – its specific script, – the individual “is not likely to be told in full detail how to conduct himself, nor will the facts of his new situation press sufficiently on him from the start to determine his conduct without his further giving thought to it” (Goffman 72). These roles need to be learned and rehearsed, varied according to the audience, and re-enacted in order to become automatic, or as Goffman notes, a second nature (cf. 17). The scripts for these roles can be found in prevailing images of the social role within society which are taught, interpreted, transmitted, stored, institutionalised and sometimes ritualised – in short, which are conventionalised and have formed a consensus on what a correct representation and performance of a particular role is. Their repeated performance further strengthens the underlying script, and, thus, the roles themselves. For these performances to be meaningful and productive, the interaction of the actors and, more importantly, the interaction between the actors and the spectators is a necessary aspect as meaning cannot be constructed without an Other because “we do not exist unless there is someone who can see us existing, what we say has no meaning until someone can understand” (de Botton, 57) and hear what we do say.

However, there are social roles, acts, for which the script has transcended its particular actors, but which still require “individual actors in order to be actualised and reproduced as reality once again” (Butler 526). This script forms an already existing directive, and, thus, is “an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene” (Butler 526) which is realised and transmitted to new actors by the help of those still on stage (cf. *ibid.*). As these performances are deeply embedded within a society, being habitually performed, thus, being reiterative, citational and irreflexive, they may seem natural or, indeed, obvious (cf. Edensor, *National Identity* 71; Butler, ‘Performative Acts’ 528). These acts are defined as performative acts. Yet, the distinction between performance, as solely conscious and deliberate, and performativity, as reiterative, citational and irreflexive, seems overly simplified. First of all, as Edensor notes, “a theatrical performer may be so used to playing out the same role that it becomes ‘second nature’ – so sedimented in the habitual bodily enactions required that reflexivity and self-monitoring is no longer necessary” (89). Thus, something that has been initially consciously

performed may take on the notion of being natural, if not obvious. In comparison, a performative act, having been performed irreflexively for a “lifetime may suddenly be revealed to those performing them as social constructions” (Edensor 89), for instance by being confronted with different cultural codes or simply by, what Goffman has termed as, disruptions (66). There are performances or acts during which the performer is acutely aware of their social constructiveness, and others during which the actor is not, and may never be. Therefore, performances shall include both self-aware acts as well as reiterative and unconsciously performed acts. Performance, as a metaphor, is highly useful, as it

allows us to look at the ways in which identities are enacted and reproduced, informing and (re)constructing a sense of collectivity. [It] also foregrounds identity as dynamic; as always in the process of production. Performance continually reconstitutes identity by rehearsing and transmitting meanings. To fix an exact meaning of identity through enaction is almost impossible for action always takes place in different spatio-temporal contexts, yet it is necessary to transmit a sense of continuity and coherence (Edensor 69).

Additionally, performances only allow for a limited range of mediatised images and are delivering a controlled, stereotyped ‘otherness’ as well as a stereotyped self (cf. Mitchell, ‘The end of public space?: People’s Park, definitions of the public, and democracy’ 119), often following a pre-scripted procedure and social conventions. Furthermore, the notion of performances ties in with the term discourse as it replicates the plurality of centres, the question of choice, while simultaneously reducing some of the openness, uncertainty and fluidity of identity by the help of regulated and limited roles. Discourses “reflect pre-existing domains present in society that shape personal identities by supplying the raw material from which they are made” (Gergen in Biggs 50). Thus, by enacting a script with all the expectations, beliefs and cognitive structures implied provided by a specific discourse, and by changing it slightly as performers adapt acts to suit new contexts, performances are not only produced by discourses but do, in turn, produce the discourse.

seems to exist in precarious balances between openness and rigidity, delight and dread<sup>7</sup>. Yet, they do provide frameworks and multiple departures from which to move on.

Whereas in a linear passage of time, which prevails in western societies (cf. Blaikie 10), childhood (birth to 13 years old), youth (13 to 18), adulthood (18 to 65), and middle age (40 to 60), the latter both connected to working and earning, are comparatively easy to define (cf. Hockey and James 135; Kite and Smith Wagner 134), the official start of old age is hard to determine. Usually, the onset of old age is not so much a slowly advancing sensation, but structured around sudden disruptions, involving a sudden personal change which is often described as a surprise (de Beauvoir 292), a revelation (ibid. 290), a metamorphosis (ibid. 283), a transformation (ibid. 290), and a crisis (ibid. 379). According to Freud, old people were “near or above the age of fifty” (Freud in Kaplan 29) and no longer curable; others have defined the age of retirement as the starting point; yet others were sure ‘true’ old age only started in what Gilleard and Higgs as well as Blaikie defined as the fourth age (80 to 85 years), a time during which older people were seen as abject and where dependence and decrepitude set in (cf. Gilleard and Higgs, ‘Ageing abjection and embodiment in the fourth age’ 137, 138, Blaikie 10). Albeit no clear, definite answer can be given, marking the age 60 to age 65 as the starting point of old age seems to be a good indicator, for it is prevalent in most definitions.

Even though age seems to be fraught with ambivalence, it has become ubiquitous, being, together with race and gender, one of the first features we notice about people and, therefore, is one of the most salient markers of social difference (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 3; Woodward in Guellette 108), driving “our interactions with others, in [seemingly] answering questions such as: How should I address them? What are their political views? What do they know about popular culture? Will they be competent? Socially aware? How slowly should I talk? How loudly?” (Fiske and Cuddy 3). Popular notions of age seem to view ageing as a highly negative process as it seemingly strips away all agency accumulated in life. It seems as if it is not death that is contrasted with life but old age (cf. de Beauvoir 539). Age, furthermore, is taken for granted and appears to be inevitable while it is simultaneously not a trivial topic – all of which, according to Ian Hacking in *The Social Construction of What?*, qualifies a “construct as worth the bother of further analysis” (12, 32). Tying in with this notion, Simone de Beauvoir remarks that the way to regard age has changed (279). Whereas old age is still mostly understood as a stable concept, critical gerontology has shown that age can be regarded as a much more fluid category, providing its own set of opportunities. It has, furthermore, ceased to be a solely biological and pathological problem, seeing a “fragmentation of a highly socialised biological process” (Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 1). Yet, the biological processes shown specifically in age, such as wrinkled skin, caused by a decreasing elasticity of the skin cells or grey hair caused by a lull of melanocyte activity,

<sup>7</sup> Before moving on, it is important to state that ageing will be seen as an inclusive process, spanning all differences, for instance those of sex and gender. Nevertheless, several scholars have noted that ageing works quite differently for men and women (cf. Sontag, ‘Double Standard of Ageing’ 1; Woodward, ‘Performing Age’ 163). This so called double standard of ageing describes that women are aged before men as with the onset of the menopause their source of power, namely their beauty and their ability to bear children, is undermined and eventually done away with (cf. Twigg 62; Jennings and Óro 74; Woodward 163-164).

often starting in adulthood and being tied to various intrinsic and extrinsic factors, of which age is only but one, should not be fully denied (cf. Tobin and Paus, 'Graying: gerontobiology of hair follicle pigmentary unit' 29-31) as some do culminate in the phase of life referred to as old age. It is these markers of difference, these stigmata, which play into the construction of age in society as they constitute visible difference. Age, thus, is not purely a social construction. Rather it is an intersection of various discourses, combining biological factors with socio-cultural questions. Furthermore, the pathological view of old age arose in the wake of modern science based medicine which up until the emergence of critical perspectives in gerontology, contributed to the dominant discourses of ageing (cf. Tulle-Winton, 'Old Bodies' 75). Even when constructing age in solely cultural terms, the body of the old is still one of the pivotal elements of ageing.

In the following, age will largely be described as the previously mentioned socio-cultural concept, which is not only a natural product of the ageing process, but a construction through various discourses. Additionally, as discourses shift and are not succeeding each other by displacing one another (cf. Tulle-Winton 67), the body as a social marker will be briefly looked upon as descriptions of older characters usually do start with an image of the body in question, because the body is the only tangible manifestation of the person that can be decorated, hidden and negotiated while simultaneously being the medium of interaction through which identity can be expressed (cf. Bourdieu in Woodward, *Understanding Identity* 104; Goffman, *Presentation of Self* 79).

Old age is, as de Beauvoir states, an Unrealisable. Older people are essentially "described from the outside, in terms of problems and deficits" (Jones and Higgs 71), because of which the "individual comes to feel he is old by means of others, [he is] pointed out by custom, by the behaviour of others and by the vocabulary itself: he's required to take their reality upon himself" (de Beauvoir 291 - 292). However, the process of being defined as old often happens without "having experienced important changes; his inner being does not accept the label that has been stuck to him - he no longer knows who he is" (de Beauvoir 292). Hereby, de Beauvoir notes two important realities of age: an inner reality in which the individual is usually as old as he or she feels, and an outer reality, in which the individual is not old per se but is made old by the structures that surround her or him. This dichotomy echoes the Cartesian dualism of mind and body in which both can seemingly exist independently from each other and in which the body fails to be an appropriate expression of the self within (cf. Estes et al. 37). Ageing individuals, or 'the old' as a group, are in many ways, such as in social, economic and corporeal terms, seen as the Other, a foreign, alien species in society (cf. Biggs 49; Tulle-Winton 65, 66) that is often constructed by a gaze of youth (cf. Higgs and Jones, 'The natural, the normal and the normative: Contested terrains in ageing and old age' 66). This classificatory system, which suggests that things are primarily definable in relation to what they are not (cf. Cavallaro, *French Feminist Theory* 24) and in which young and old occupy binary positions, implies an imbalance of power (cf. Derrida in Woodward 36) which enables the young to define what is constituted as old or deviant in comparison to themselves (cf. Guellette 22).

However, the relationship between the in-group of the young and the out-group of the old is a highly ambivalent one as the old “retain the same values, ideals” (de Beauvoir 3), attitudes and cultural scripts as the young on the one hand. On the other hand the lines are further blurred by the fact that the old had been young once, thus belonging to the in-group of the young at some point, correspondingly the young will eventually belong to the out-group of the old (cf. Greenberg et al. 28). Hence, the need to clearly set themselves apart from the out-group increases. In this respect, as Margaret Morganroth Guelllette argues in *Aged by Culture*,

age [has been] used as race and gender have been used: to construct unarguable and unbridgeable relations of difference, to increase misinformation, subjective inferiority, disrespect and animosity between groups; to serve as another set of obstacles for political activism, family solidarity and rational explanations of historical change (32).

Age, therefore can never be seen outside of the larger society in which it is situated as “phenomena of ageing and old age are directly related [to its nature]” (Estes et al. 20) and perceptions of ageing are “always determined and influenced by the culture from which they arise” (Miquel-Baldellou 159). In order to create this seemingly unbridgeable difference, a din of representations, which are broadcasted and internalised at a preferably early age are needed (cf. Guelllette 27). Furthermore, as the Other, the old need to be clearly defined as being different. The old need to be marked visibly, exaggerated and homogenised as the Other, thus allowing the in-group of the young with its set of social expectations and constraints that ensure inclusion within the group to engage in processes of “separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions” (cf. Douglas in Woodward 33) that may result in “ritualised exile [of the old] in retirement homes, at liminal position at the horizon of society” (cf. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* 9).

One way, by which such clear cut boundaries can be established, is focussing on truly visible markers of difference which in turn influence the stereotypical images a society holds about old age. Erving Goffman, in 1963, coined the term stigma which describes a special relationship between an attribute and a stereotype and refers commonly to “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual[, an undesired difference from normal,] and bad about the moral character to the signifier” (Goffman, *Stigma* 1,5). It can, however, appear in various forms:

[from] abominations of the body, the various physical deformities; blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behaviour; [to the] tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages [...] (Goffman 4).

By the help of these deviations from the norm, an inferiority of the specific group possessing these markers can be inferred. In the eyes of others, such a stigmatised group becomes tainted and less than fully human as the undesired attributes are believed to be a reflection of the spoiled or faulty identity of the group or the individual (cf. Goffman 5) which in turn legitimises the exclusion of individuals from the in-group and the marginalisation of a group within society. However, the stigmatised individual,

just as in the case of an aged character, tends to hold the same beliefs, attitudes and values as the perceived in-group from which it is excluded (cf. Goffman 7). In the case of the old the body offers clearly visible stigma. The old body is characterised by a lack of self-control, as weak, bent, wrinkled, sagging and greying. As Stanely Halls compares the old body to a ship, the body is described as a "battered, waterlogged, leaky derelict[] without cargo or crew, chart, rudder, sail or engine, remaining afloat only because [it has] struck no fatal rocks or because the storms [have] not yet swamped [it]" (qdt. in Blaikie 35-36). In contrast, the body of the dominant group which is much more valuable (cf. Shilling, 'The Body and Difference' 89), worthy of reward, young, "hard and muscular, [...] sleek, thin, and toned" (Benson, 'The Body, Health and Eating Disorders' 123), and thus not only a reflection of the valuable and good character residing within but also a site of control (cf. Woodward 67) in the project of the self. The old body with its visible markers of age becomes a stigmatised, a faulty and undesirable body which seemingly hints towards a spoiled or stigmatised identity. Moreover, this body is seen as an expression of purely natural processes, harking back to a pathological view of old age and age as a totalising experience, in terms of medical and biological perspectives, which are not a recent development but range back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century during which, in the wake of the rise of modern science based medicine, a

narrowing [of] meanings of the body in old age has occurred [...]. This [...] replaced the polysemic ones of the past in which the last stages of life were valued and significant by virtue of their nearness to death, and in which there were still possibilities of narratives of spiritual development (Cole in Twigg, 'The Body, Gender, and Age: Feminist Insights in Social Gerontology' 61).

This view, however, offers another aspect which should not be discarded. Old bodies which are expected to remain presentable (cf. Tulle-Winton 70), have become increasingly fixed because of their sheer materiality and biological realities. The young are able to engage in the reconstruction and enhancement of the body, moulding it after the standards presented by multiple discourses and submitting it to tight regimes of control, thus allowing them greater fluidity and mutability. Old bodies are mostly denied this opportunity. This results, as Mike Hepworth notes, **in a contradiction "between the physical processes of ageing, as reflected in outward appearance and the inner, or subjective 'real self' which paradoxically remains young"**, which he has termed the 'Mask of Ageing' ('Positive ageing and the Mask of Age' 93). This mask refers to the aged exterior which "is conceived as inflexible, inhibiting participation in positive elements of postmodernity as it becomes increasingly difficult to see a youthful self behind it" (Biggs, 'Choosing not to be old?' 554). The older self, moreover, in the mirror stage of ageing, "similar to the mirror stage of infancy, when the child sees and internalises a (false) understanding of itself as the whole, pleasing, unified image in the mirror, in contrast to the partial, disjointed image that the child experiences" (Woodward, *Ageing and its Discontents* 67), does not recognise the older body, rejecting it and hence increasing the split between inner self and outer reality. In order, however, to retain possibilities of self-enhancement, recognition, belonging and status (cf. Huo and Binning, 'Why the Psychological Experience of Respect Matters in Group Life' 1572), the individual strives to be a social actor within the in-group. This is only possible through

various technologies which “permit individuals to effect [...] a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality” (Foucault in Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 60).

One solution would be the masking of age<sup>8</sup>, which sees the cloaking of undesirable traits and the restoration of youthful looks (cf. Biggs, ‘Age, Gender and Masquerade’ 52; Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 133; Blaikie 190-191; Jones and Higgs 1517), as well as taking form in the “active concealment of signs of old age through clothing, [anti-ageing products,] make-up or bearing [as well as] by the surgical correction of body parts” (Jones and Higgs 1517), by refusing to state ones age or avoiding activities that mask frailty (cf. Blaikie 190-191). The masking of age seeks to negate age and to restore a youthful exterior which conforms to the perceived youthful self within. Yet, the process of masking, can, as Woodward states, become a masquerade which involves the aforementioned strategies, but moreover includes “language games, body language and forms of personal adornment that contribute to the performance of self” (Biggs, ‘Age, Gender and Masquerade’ 52). Masquerade, therefore, “is seen to be of particular interest because it is, in this sense, an arbitrator between the inner and outer logics of adult ageing” (Biggs, ‘Age, Gender and Masquerade’ 52), taking the social aspects of ageing into account and trying to conceal them by the active creation of a social facade (cf. Biggs, ‘Choosing not to be old?’ 554). Furthermore, it simultaneously and knowingly reveals and conceals ageing (cf. Estes et al. 39). In comparison, the mask of ageing sees the body and the mind in a juxtaposition that needs to be negated by masking age, allowing the trapped young self to escape from its bindings while the masquerade, building on the same assumption, is aware that age cannot be fully negated or masked. Thus, masquerade may see a submission to and resistance of ageist stereotypes by knowingly playing with these stereotypes (cf. Estes et al. 39) and, therefore, underlining their artificial nature. Yet, the masking is not unproblematic as Blaikie and Goffman note. Enacting such a highly idealised, at least in terms of appearance, version of self in order to conform to in-group standards can lead to self-delusion and the denial of selfhood (cf. Blaikie 190). In using visible markers of age and defining these as deviant from the in-group, age is constructed as different on the level of corporeality. The aged, as Fanon describes, are therefore “given no chance. [They are] overdetermined from without. [They are] the slave not [only] of the ‘idea’ that others have but of [their] own appearance” (Fanon in *Medietas* 3).

Whereas the discourse of the body as stigmatised, declining and problematic foregrounds the presumed natural difference as well as the biological legitimisation of such difference between young and old, biology or the body cannot fully explain ageing. As theories of gender and race have largely influenced ageing studies (cf. Biggs, ‘Age, Gender and Masquerade’ 46), ageing has been noted as both natural and cultural leading Guellette to claim that we are aged by culture. Here, no clear line between one and the other can be drawn as both discourses, the biological and the constructivist, influence one

<sup>8</sup> Here, by using the term ‘masking of age’, a clear separation to the aforementioned mask of ageing shall be made. The mask of ageing, which refers to the body being a mask for a younger self within, is, however, often used synonymously with the process of masking the ageing exterior. In order to avoid this, masking of age, mask of ageing and masquerade shall be taken as different concepts.

another. Science and biomedicine were “viewed as the most influential source for tackling many of the problems and challenges associated with ageing” (Katz in Estes et al. 10) and thus contributed to the production of dominant discourses of ageing (cf. Tulle-Winton 75). The biological discourse proposed an essential, transcendental core of identity, remaining stable and young all through people’s lives while the outward shell ages – a claim that has been recently disproven by Harris et al. in a study on personality stability from the ages 14 to age 77. Yet, as mentioned in the chapter on identity, a sense of sameness is retained over the life course, which is then contradicted by the binary construction of adulthood and age, as both is seen as a continuum. Age, in the context of such an approach that falls in-between an essential and non-essential one, proposing a subject closely resembling Hall’s sociological subject, is part performance, part performativity, part natural process.

Performance and performativity need a script which is widely available in society in order to construct the roles which will then be performed. The script itself will, most likely, have been going on before one arrived on stage (cf. Butler 526) having transcended the actors and being enacted and negotiated by various other actors. Still, age offers a variety of possible roles and cannot be reduced to one specific role. The script for most, if not all, of these roles stems from the difference within the classificatory system between the young and the old. The point of difference explained above, has been one point of departure and, by a focus on visible markers, has spawned and influenced the conventional structures with which society thinks about ageing.

According to Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, “[o]lder persons [...] have not been subjected to a history of purposeful and unequal treatment [...], old age also does not define a discrete and insular minority because all persons, if they live out their normal life, will experience it” (qdt. in Pasupathi and Löckenhoff 201) and yet, we, according to Butler, live in a society permeated by ageism (cf. Butler in Sijuwade 2). Ageism refers to the systematic stereotyping and discrimination of individuals or groups because of their biological and chronological age (Braithwaite 311) and goes largely unchallenged and unnoticed in society (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 3), thus leading to the Justice’s statement above. **From an early age, children are encouraged to view older people as different from themselves (cf. Estes et al. 30), resulting in the usage of ageist attitudes “without conscious awareness, control or intention of harm” (Levy and Banaji, ‘Implicit Ageism’ 50) as they have been internalised and deeply engrained, not only on a societal level but also on an individual one.** As the human mind must think in categories, stereotypes, “cognitive structures that store our beliefs and expectations about the characteristics of members and of social groups” (Fiske and Cuddy 4), we reduce the data provided by our surroundings. Yet, where do these conventionalised, generic and simplified images stem from? How come that individuals perceive them as natural instead of optional? It can be assumed that representations of old age draw from a memory that “[consists] largely of images that have by now become so conventionalised that they determine what is a ‘correct’ representation of [old age]” (Kaes qtd. in Guynn 166) as it is “shared by a number of people, convey[ing] collective [identity,] includ[ing] traditions, transmissions, and transferences [and being] cast away in symbols and objects” (Assmann, ‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’ 110, 212). As these images depend on the interaction between people in order to

create meaning and be meaningful in turn, they are, nevertheless, open for re-evaluation and change. Usually, memory, be it communicative or cultural<sup>9</sup>, provides a prototype of a group or a type of person which embodies their key attributes (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 5). In terms of old age, the prototype is slow, bent, lonely, dependent, confused, dowdy, less ambitious, less intellectually competent and obsolete. Yet, Hummert notes that “people do not hold a single stereotype of the elderly as a group [but] that they have several stereotypes for different types of elderly individuals” (‘Multiple Stereotypes of Elderly and Young Adults: A Comparison of Structure and Evaluations’ 182). Three of the prevalent stereotypes include the grandmotherly type, who is helpful, kind, serene and trustworthy, the elderly statesman, described as intelligent, powerful, competitive, aggressive and intolerant and the senior citizen, who is lonely, old-fashioned, weak and worried (cf. Hummert 182; Fiske and Cuddy 7)<sup>10</sup>. These images, in order to be dominant, need to be connected to institutions of education, transmission and interpretation, by the help of which the images are taught to a society and to the group itself. Apart from being institutionalised, taught and objectified, these images might even be cultivated by specialists, formalised, stabilised by material symbolisation and on occasion openly celebrated and repeatedly performed (cf. Assmann 111–113). Therefore, some of the mentioned stereotypes have been formalised, cultivated, and taught by the help of literature and mass media. Others have been equally interpreted and stabilised by social policies, therefore, legitimising the stereotypes in turn, yet others have been visualised and, thus, taught by the help of images and movies<sup>11</sup>.

Whereas stereotypes about old age include some form of social truth (Zebrowitz in Braithwaite 315) and are referred to as simply productive if, at the same time, reductive, ageism might also be expressed in solely negative terms. The flip side of stereotypes, prejudice, meaning “the holding of derogatory attitudes or beliefs, the expression of negative affect, or the display of hostile and discriminatory behaviour toward members of a group on account of their membership in that group” (Zebrowitz in Braithwaite 315), is explored in negative images and in language devaluation, often using specific terminology to describe the old, for instance as ‘old foggy’, ‘hag’, ‘geezer’ or ‘fool’ (Nuessel in Montepare and Zebrowitz 335). Both constitute a part of ageist behaviour which, according to Hazan, can take three forms:

- 1) behaviours that distance, ignore, exclude or underrepresent older adults in comparison to younger adults;

<sup>9</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the differences between cultural and communicative memory, see: Assmann, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*.

<sup>10</sup> More subcategories include the perfect grandparent, the liberal matriarch/patriarch, the John Wayne conservative, the recluse, the severely impaired, the vulnerable, the shrew/curmudgeon, and the despondent which have been determined in the study by using a scale including the following trait pairs: „successful-unsuccessful, demanding-undemanding, bad-good, attractive-unattractive, valuable-worthless, weak-strong, frustrating-rewarding, sad-happy, calm-irritable, dependent-independent, warm-cold, active-passive, slow-fast, sick-healthy, concluding-beginning, dominant-submissive, clean-dirty, hostile-friendly, wise-foolish, strict-lenient, interesting-boring, relaxed-tense, humble-proud, selfish-unselfish, and broad-narrow“ (Hummert 187–190).

<sup>11</sup> A discussion of the attitudes towards old age in literature has been done by Hazan in *Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions* on pages eight to ten.

- 2) behaviours that are more positive, beneficial, protective or compassionate towards older adults: legislative protections, positive stereotypes, more deferential treatment;
- 3) behaviours that are negative or overtly harmful: negative images of ageing in mass media, differential access to treatments, inappropriate use of displaced baby talk/ elderspeak, denied access to jobs/housing, elder abuse (28)

Yet, the separation of these types of behaviour is difficult as both positive as well as negative stereotypes may lead to types of behaviour “that distance, ignore, exclude or underrepresent older adults in comparison to younger adults” (Hazan 28). Here, positive notions such as successful ageing, which targets the affluent (cf. Kribernegg and Maierhofer 10), may influence social roles available to older people which can serve as means of social control (cf. Hazan 44), thus supporting and reinforcing prevailing social conditions of segregation, ambiguity, and alienation (cf. *ibid.*). These attitudes towards ageing are, both in negative and positive terms, “institutionalised in the social structure legally, medically, through welfare, education and income policies and internalised in the attitudes of individuals” (Blaikie 17). Additionally, stereotypes and prejudices, apart from serving social goals such as belonging, control and self-enhancement, can become self-fulfilling prophecies (cf. Charles 238; Kite and Smith Wagner 152) as “we see ourselves as we imagine others see us and therefore the behaviour of older people and their attitudes towards themselves are shaped and reinforced by society’s prevailing images of them” (Hazan 33). Thus, the discourse of ageism seems as natural as the biological discourse of age on which it draws, adopting ideological structures in seeming obvious and easily recognisable. Therefore, it leads older people to assume these subject positions provided by the discourse, identifying with them, strengthening and reinforcing these images by adopting and re-enacting them.

The various conventional images provide the social actors with guidelines for a possible script. Age, thus, is not a rigid construct but more ambiguous and fluid, allowing for an interaction between a seemingly stable concept and the social actor performing it as well as between the social actor and possible spectators. Age might then be described as a “cultural negotiation process on an interactional level” (Lövgren 40). While the bio-medical discourse produces and legitimises ageism and vice versa, thus, creating a discursive formation, the ageing prototype, being slow, bent, lonely, dependent, confused, dowdy, less ambitious, less intellectually competent, serene, calm, virtuous and asexual, which is perpetuated by literature and the media and manifested in many legal, medical and popular fields, might serve as a first guidance script for those entering old age. As ageism is “a primitive disease” (Butler in Braithwaite 312), a seemingly natural discourse connected with the narrative of decline, social actors may unwittingly take on these directives by using symbols, gestures, and rituals which are deeply embedded within society, either from those actors on stage or by being familiar with them through internalisation and their circulation within society, turning age into a reiterative, citational and reflexive performance. Yet, these scripts are neither natural nor are they truly obvious and can be widened as they include more specific social roles and positions like grandparent, figure of authority, silver surfer and others, both negative and positive. These social roles,

by offering choice and a conscious performance might, indeed, be taken up in certain contexts, and yet they are acts that do not continue into other contexts. Performances are observed in specific spacio-temporal contexts which “are shaped to permit particular performances” and in which these acts are “dramatised, broadcast, shared and reproduced” (Edensor 69) by a particular audience which serves as the Other to the performer, recognising and validating him on the one hand while simultaneously being able, through immediate feedback and close scrutiny, to alter the act of the performer and, thus, exercise social control by “minimis[ing] any diversions from the usual performative code” (Edensor 70). Therefore, age is usually performed in an idealised form that conforms to social expectations and which can be used for personal gain (cf. Hazan 35), for instance by consciously enacting the aforementioned prototype. Should the performer, however, transgress expectations and boundaries, either by having visible, non-hidden stigmata or by breaking rules of conduct, for instance instead of conforming to the stereotype of being old, serene, calm, virtuous and asexual, the actor is dressed differently and shows foolish behaviour, feelings of anger, love, jealousy or sexual desires, he or she will be punished by being looked upon with disgust, ostracised or barred from further interactions (cf. de Beauvoir 3). Furthermore, by concealing age, by creating not only a mask but a masquerade and by enacting valuable, youthful standards, age can also be turned into a performance of an idealised, young self which is problematic as the performance might be revealed to be just that by the changing spacio-temporal contexts in which it is enacted. Moreover, the nature of age, as facilitating a sense of continuity of the self, not necessarily a younger self but simply a continuous imagined sameness, allows the actors to shed social roles in a backstage area, allowing them to enter various discourses and assuming different roles within the discourse of ageing. Within the backstage area, the inner realities and in the multiplicity of roles, which do change from audience to audience, lies the opportunity for actors to undermine, renegotiate and change the discourses which provide these subject positions. While they might not be able to change them permanently, they may at least modify these discourses temporarily.

One form of resistance against general notions of age and ageing, the most simple and easily refutable one, would be simply to resist age and ageing by masking age (cf. Hepworth, ‘Positive Ageing and the Mask of ageing’ 93-94), which might be realised by “active concealment of signs of old age through clothing, [anti-ageing products,] make-up or bearing [as well as] by the surgical correction of body parts” (Jones and Higgs 1517). It is, however, the latter part which is yet again stigmatised and morally sanctioned (cf. Estes et al. 34), leading to an idolisation of those older individuals who refuse to conceal ageing by the help of biomedicine (cf. King 74-75; Whelehan and Gwynne 11; Jermyn 108). As noted before this adaptation of this mask as a second nature might either lead to problems of self-delusion which is realised by habitual performance as well as the belief of the actor in the performance, or to pointing out that age is truly “a failure to be young” (Estes et al. 34), thus denouncing age as undesirable and stigmatising the process even further.

Another form of resisting age and the ageing discourse can be achieved by withdrawal and detachment. Whereas withdrawal describes “the rejection of society’s expectations through dissociation

from them” (Hazan 35) leading to the exclusion and disengagement from society, detachment expresses the exclusion and separation from active society and “is achieved through immersion in recollections and reminiscences [...] prevalent among significant numbers of the elderly, especially in old age homes or other environments which exert strong and ongoing pressures on the aged” (Vesperi in Hazan 35). Both approaches, unfortunately, degrade the older character as “defined by an *exis* not by a *praxis*: a being not a doing [whom] [t]ime is carrying towards an end” (de Beauvoir 217, emphasis in the original). The older actor is passive and no longer a part of the society, the cultural and social structure he or she had inhabited. Therefore, both approaches are neither favourable for the older actor nor do perceptions of the old change by adhering to them as – quite on the contrary – stereotypes of the old, passive, reminiscing being, detached from ‘the real world’ are fortified. Moreover, it implies a social relocation or a “transition from a multidimensional existence to membership in a one-dimensional category” (Hazan 37), which does not grasp the multitudinousness of ageing.

A third form of resisting age also focusses on the old but awards them a more active role. Older individuals might seek active rebellion against ageist attitudes, by the “dismissal of the basic cultural assumptions upon which the stereotypes of the aged are constructed”, either through explicitly ‘living on’ as they are without conforming to societal standards, or by taking up roles seemingly unfitting or unbecoming for older characters. For instance, the role of the jester or the fool who can say “anything that occurs to him without fear of penalty”, being usually awarded to younger actors, might be taken up. Moreover, this form of resistance may take the form of “separati[ng] from the oppressive milieu of everyday life in order to construct an alternative reality [implying to take] a great deal of care not to stumble into the social traps laid for the elderly by selecting the symbols, situations, and the people over which they have control and rejecting the rest” (Hazan 35-36) or by taking symbols and turning them over into signs of strength, activity and integrity (cf. Hazan 36). By doing so, older actors are able to pursue new directions and are “free to engage in often harsh social criticism, daring to say what others cannot because they are no longer subject to the normal social pressures” (ibid.), which in turn might also be connected to the role of the fool or jester. Yet again, this is not without problems. If there is no second in-group consisting of those that are old and share similar attitudes, the older characters might be viewed with disgust, because desires and wishes of the old are

often overlooked and met with disgust: in them love and jealousy seen as revolting or absurd, sexuality repulsive and violence ludicrous. They are required to be a standing example of all the virtues. Above all they are called upon to display serenity: the world asserts that they possess it [...] (de Beauvoir 3)

As this approach, too, shows a clear contradiction to societal expectations, the aged might again face exclusion and marginalisation from the valuable in-group.

Lastly, the aged, who are “expected to try and assimilate to the ways” of the younger in-group, as it is the in-group that feels threatened by age – both in the sense of its nearness to death, revealing the fragility of life, as well as because of its threat to social, economic, cultural power and aesthetic value – may be turning this assimilation into a parody. In order to soften the threat stated above, the

younger in-group favours a “a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, ‘Of mimicry and man’ 86). As described in the first approach to resistance, the old are expected to adhere to midlife norms in particular, i. e. being active, fit and productive, conforming to forms of dress, behaviour and appearance (cf. Biggs, ‘New Ageism’ 103-104), yet only to a certain degree and only when respecting the allegedly natural and unshakeable differences between the ages of life. Thus, the aged are “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86), creating a “blurred copy” (Küpper 261) of the young. It is this blurriness which provides the space to deconstruct and subvert the discourse. By placing themselves deliberately within the discourse and by copying it, assuming those roles which are assigned to them, older characters are able to uncover and in turn deconstruct the mechanisms and internal contradictions of the discourse (cf. Derrida in Cavallaro 28; Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* 208-210). Furthermore, mimicry “is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics” (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Triffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* 105-106). By consciously mimicking the younger in-group, even if problems similar to those of the mask of ageing may arise, the aged are able to retain their status as members of the society in which they live, ensuring continuing self-worth, which “depends on the worth ascribed to us by others” (Braithwaite 319), belonging and modes of self-enhancement.

Age, as seen, is ambivalent, fluid and ever changing, adapting new discourses and continuously renegotiating ageing identities. As it can be constructed in multiple ways, most of these discourses are not mentioned or expounded above, discourses of ageing may often be described as discursive formations or networks of knowledge which approximate to the matter at hand. What can be stated, however, is that

[p]opular experiences of ageing have shifted, from the dark days when the ‘aged poor’ sat in motionless rows in the workhouse, to a modernising interwar phase when ‘the elderly’ were expected to don the retirement uniform, to postmodern times when older citizens are encouraged not just to dress ‘young’ and look youthful, but to exercise, have sex, take holidays, socialise in ways indistinguishable from those of their children’s generation (Blaikie 104).

## 2.3 Thinking outside the box? Age and Literature

Ageism, if running unchecked and unnoticed, may exacerbate thinking outside of the categories provided. Problematising this even further, ageism is spread widely within society and is affiliated, reproduced and transmitted by various institutions. Literature, which is connected to and, in some cases approved by (cf. Charles 239), institutions of interpretation, transmission and education and which is, additionally, objectified, cultivated by specialists, formalised, stabilised by material symbolisation, and on occasion openly celebrated and repeatedly performed (cf. Assmann 111-113), provides social actors with various images with which to think (cf. Danowski 335) as

individuals construct mental notes on or models of the media they are exposed to. These models are then stored as available information within the memory system. If activated, these models are often utilised to form perceptions of reality, thus impacting how a person will respond to a similar situation (Danowski 336).

Moreover, literature, which depends on generally accepted concepts and individuals form a two-way-relationship as the images provided by literature are not simply accepted and adopted in daily life, but as Lövgren echoing notions of Hall, Hepworth and Featherstone notes, “[u]sers sift the mediated messages they encounter during the day, adopting different reading positions, rejecting some messages, reading other messages oppositionally, negotiating some and adapting or latching onto others” (‘Denying age?’ 37; cf. Hall 130, Hepworth and Featherstone, *Images of Ageing* 735).

Thus, a communication and interaction between literary texts and the individuals, who are actively reading them, takes place, in which literature spreads and provides images, notions and structures, perpetuating those already existing in society (cf. Guellette 131), with the reader weighing them in comparison with each other and his or her own values and ideas. In this capacity, literature, and more importantly literature of popular culture, is “of importance because of its appeal and impact” (Laws 116), thus informing and shaping self-images of individuals and groups (cf. Lövgren 50). What is more, literature is often very much aware of the zeitgeist of a period, and therefore able to transmit comparatively new and progressive notions to a large part of society. As people create culture, “cultural creations [may] become realities which through time are taken for granted as natural and inevitable” (Blaikie 5). However, to add a grain of salt, these images as they are not quite as passively absorbed as Blaikie suggests, involve a process of interaction and as the reader does have his or her own images, provided by, for instance, experience, exist on an individual and social level and do not need to be mutually reinforcing, even though they often are by said process of negotiation (cf. Sijuwade 1). Furthermore, literature also depends on stereotypes, abstractions, and simplifications (cf. Charles 238) which cannot adequately represent all of society’s notions and complexities but only a glimpse of its nature. This is made even more difficult by the fact that literature itself is produced by society and produces society, thus validating and negotiating discourses on the one hand while, on the other hand, being simultaneously a product of them.

It seems quite “reasonable to assume, that what we think and feel about old people in our society is in part a product of what we have read” (Charles 239) as “by selecting and emphasising certain features, social guidelines and guiding principles” on how to construct various topics are provided by literature (Merten in Wangler 108). Aged subject positions, as seen in chapter two, largely depend on these representations in order to be constructed. Assuming that “the allocation of [literary] space to the elderly at once indicates their place in the community and instructs us as to the overall structure of society and the nature of social relationships prevailing within it” (Hazan 14) paints a bleak picture, leading Woodward to state:

I submit that the relative lack of ambiguity in our representations of ageing, the relative paucity of their elaboration or differentiation, is a symptom that our culture as a whole has not succeeded in producing persuasive representations of ageing –in particular the ageing body– which are characterised by tolerance (Woodward in Tulle-Winton 71).

As Montepare and Zebrowitz, Woodward, Guellette, Wohlmann, and many others have pointed out, old or aged characters are largely invisible or degraded to minor characters (cf. Montepare and Zebrowitz

in Cuddy and Fiske 3; Woodward in Tulle-Winton 71; Guellette 160; Wohlmann 14). Older characters, if they are to be found in minor roles, are often “used as conduits for comic relief, exploiting stereotypes of physical, cognitive and sexual ineffectiveness” (Cuddy and Fiske 3). They are shown in archetypal roles, simply signifying “what [they’ve] lost and what youth has: valued traits such as attractiveness, health, creativity, brains, charm, articulateness, efficacy, sensitivity and promise, not only in terms of stable possession of cultural capital but in accumulation” (Guellette 130). They occupy roles such as sages, wise men/women, invalids, religious figures, witches, wizards, grandparents, spinsters, widows, hags, visible reminders of death, guardians, misers, preservers of status and hierarchy, vampires (cf. Miquel-Baldellou 161) and are associated with authority, social class, family and domestic values, experience, knowledge, hierarchy, security, immortality, infertility, ugliness, wickedness, narrow-mindedness, frailty and magic (cf. *ibid.* 173; Hazan 14). In order to show their age, older characters are often simply described as ‘old’ – leading McGuire to comment that “no other generation is so completely described by the use of a single word (that can be an insult)” (204). Moreover, there is a difference, as Hazan notes, between the description of men and women that should be kept in mind for further analysis as older women are predominately invisible or pose as a canvas to depict the degradation of the moral character, whereas men are often shown in positions that transcend negative attitudes of ageing and “are never predominately treated as old” (Hazan 24). Cultural and moral heroes in literature are, as Montepare and Zebrowitz state, rarely elderly adults (335).

Seemingly, literature offers rigid and increasingly negative social roles which older adults might be able to enact, therefore replicating ageism prevalent in society. Additionally, as social scripts, roles and acting age begin in childhood (cf. Guellette 160), during which cultural attitudes and habits are taught, absorbed, and learned before they become normal, a negative, marginalised ageing identity acquired then may well turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy as behaviour may, in the course of socialisation, be altered in ways that “confirm the stereotypes, a process [also] known as *behavioural confirmation*” (Fiske and Cuddy 14, emphasis in original). Moreover, children use such “stereotypic information to direct their own behaviours in social interactions” (*ibid.* 15), resulting in disrespectful behaviour towards the elderly. As most children will live into old age, “images of the elderly portrayed in [...] literature are [...] increasingly important [as they] play a major role in attitude formation toward ageing” (McGuire 204). Therefore, literature which seeks to target, negotiate and change an ageist discourse, may be better situated within children’s and young adult literature in order to promote positive images to those who might take these up and re-enact them within society.

### 3 EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES

#### in *His Dark Materials* and *Harry Potter*

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As noted in the introduction, literature seeking change needs to fulfil some requirements, which shall be repeated in the following. Firstly, in order to be able to transmit notions of ageing to a preferably large audience, they need to be equally accessible for young adults, people in middle-age and those approaching later life stages as well as be able to bridge culture specific borders by the help of translation and further still by using motifs and conventions understood by most people. Secondly, as the change of perspective in ageing has been located during the 80s, 90s and early 2000s, the literature should have been written between 1990, in order to detect possible changes in attitudes, and the present day, preferably as a series, as to capture the zeitgeist of the period of change mentioned above. Thirdly, and connected to the previous points, the texts should have enjoyed a financial and cultural success, which is expressed by sales numbers as well as by fan-communities, the given consideration of social, political and cultural issues within academia, and the adaptation as a movie or theatre play, all of which highlights the interactive relationship between the text and the reader as well as the interaction of text, image and sound. The opportunities and limitations which such a genre provides, as well as a general look at how age has been explored in fantasy literature will be explored in depth.

Yet the question why this thesis focusses on fantasy and not on children's literature or more 'realistic' literature for young adults remains. The notion of rejecting children's literature can be attributed to the fact that young adult novels which are aimed at people from the age of 12 to 18, are more conscious of notions and images provided by literature, actively negotiating and evaluating models and structures, while still being unaware enough of them to easily adapt new ways of viewing individuals within society. It is in particular perceived natural binaries and concepts for which young adult literature might both be a confirmation and threat. As stereotypes and concepts "are processed mindlessly by individuals in their youth [which] may lead to erroneous perceptions" (Golub et al. 292), young adult literature, in providing alternatives, different perspectives or new concepts is able to distribute concepts, which, mindlessly processed, may become part of the youth's realities. Thus, a study found that for instance reading *Harry Potter* and identifying with the main character or those associated with him "was positively associated with perspective taking and in turn, [...] with improved attitudes toward refugees only among those not identified with Voldemort" (Vezzali et al., 'The greatest magic of Harry Potter: Reducing prejudice' 115). Thus, "[e]ducational interventions based on reading fantasy books that have characteristics similar to those of the *Harry Potter* series may improve relations

with several types of stigmatised groups” (Vezzali et al. 117), among them elderly persons. Moreover, connected with the first requirement, young adult literature is less bound to age categories, as “55% of buyers of works that publishers designate for kids aged 12 to 17 – known as YA books – are 18 or older, with the largest segment aged 30 to 44, a group that alone accounted for 28% of YA sales [and when] asked about the intended recipient, they report that 78% of the time they are purchasing books for their own reading” (*PublishersWeekly.com* par.1). Within this segment, fantasy novels, such as *The Twilight Saga*, *The Hunger Games* and *Harry Potter* (cf. Peterson, ‘A Literary Agent’s Advice’ par. 12) are highly sought after and very successful.

The genre of fantasy with its relationship to reality (cf. Hunt, ‘Revisited’ 7) provides multiple possibilities. Yet, there is a vague consensus on what fantasy actually is (cf. Hunt, *Alternative Worlds* 10; Zipes 3; Farah, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* 18). For Adorno,

fantasy was never essential to important artworks; the invention, for instance, of fantastic beings in contemporary plastic arts is of minor significance, just as the sudden intervention of a musical motif, though hardly to be discounted, remains powerless so long as it does not surpass its own factuality through what develops out of it. If everything in artworks, including what is most sublime, is bound up with what exists, which they oppose, fantasy cannot be the mere capacity to escape the existing by positing the non-existing as if it existed. On the contrary, fantasy shifts whatever artworks absorb of the existing into constellations through which they become the other of the existing, if only through its determinate negation (*Aesthetic Theory* 173).

He offers some points of departure that have been echoed by other scholars, such as that fantasy remains powerless if it is not employed to create something that is other, different from reality, that fantasy is necessarily connected with the circumstances of its production, namely that it has to be explicitly or implicitly bound up with the reality that produces it, that fantasy cannot be an escape from reality and, last but not least, that fantasy<sup>12</sup> is able to become an Other to reality. More recent definitions echo these points. For Irwin fantasy is “the literature of the impossible” (*The Game of the Impossible* 4); Rabkin states that “its polar opposite is reality” (*The Fantastic in Literature* 14); for Manlove, it is “of another order of reality from that in which we exist and form our notions of possibility” (*Modern Fantasy: five studies* 3) and “a fiction involving the supernatural or impossible” (*The Fantasy Literature of England* 3). For Attebery the term is a little more self-referential, as fantasy seemingly violates “what the author clearly believes to be natural law” (*The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin* 2). Le Guin turns fantasy into a survival strategy, as “fantasy is a different approach to reality, an alternative technique for apprehending and coping with existence. It is not anti-rational, but para-rational; not realistic, but surrealistic, superrealistic; a heightening of reality” (*The Language of the Night. Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* 79). Nevertheless, the term retains an inherent ambiguity.

By its relation to reality, by becoming a counterpoint, that fantasy literature becomes a mirror, or, in Foucauldian terms, a heterotopia, a second space. There are two types of mirrors: the first of which

<sup>12</sup> Adorno, hereby, describes more the process of imagination than fantasy. Thus, when fantasy or *Phantasie* as Adorno terms it, “shifts whatever into artworks absorb of the existing constellations” (173) it produces a fantastical or fictional product, which is why fantasy has been used, more or less, interchangeably with imagination.

being a utopia which has “a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. [It] present[s] society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case [the utopia is a] fundamentally unreal space” (cf. Foucault 47). The second type and in this case the one more compelling, is a real place. A place that does “exist and that [is] formed in the very founding of society” (Foucault 48) but is very much different from the sites it reflects. Heterotopias are, thus,

something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality (Foucault 48).

These alternative places function like mirrors. A mirror is an object that is inherently a utopia, as “I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, [...] that enables me to see myself there where I am absent” (Foucault 48) and yet, it is a real place, because of its materiality and existence within reality. Therefore, a mirror is similarly a heterotopia. Furthermore, by looking into the mirror, the space that opens up within becomes “absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (Foucault 48), while the space outside, the space the reader occupies is made similarly real if the reader returns to it. When it comes to fantasy literature, one of its defining factors seems to be the creation of an alternative world which opens up within the pages. This place, which Tolkien, in his essay *On Fairie Stories*, called a secondary world, needs to be ‘true’, requiring an inner consistency that

accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside (60).

This world is, thus, within and outside of reality, a real space, and object in terms of its materiality, and additionally made real by its connection “with all the space that surrounds it” (Foucault 48) showing a reflection of reality which the reader knows. Moreover, a heterotopia, similarly to the alternative world of fantasy literature, is “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (Foucault 50) thus opening up a space for what Moorcock termed ‘multiverses’, enabling multiple worlds to exist side by side, within or outside, only to be entered via a virtual or real passageway. This passageway can, in reality, be the sheer act of opening and reading the printed or digital text. Within the literary product itself, however, another layer is added by this notion. Entering and the possibility of leaving poses another principle of a heterotopia, which is directly echoed by fantasy literature. Foucault states that heterotopias are open yet closed spaces, which isolate and make them penetrable at the same time (cf. Foucault 49-51). Mirroring these notions, alternative worlds are equally open and closed. Within fantasy literature, heroes must pass through portals into another world which is closed off from the world of the hero. Even though the hero may cross both ways, the fantastic element, be it magic or otherwise, does not. Thus, the alternative

world within remains closed off from the mundane world while remaining penetrable for the hero (cf. Mendelsohn 59). Fantasy literature is such an open and closed space as it is limited by its materiality as well as by its reader's level of education, understanding and literacy. Yet, fantasy literature is an open space, able to be explored by everyone. Thus, heterotopias, like the alternative worlds within literature and the space provided by fantasy literature, are a cultural space as no culture fails to construct and produce such sites (cf. Foucault 48). These sites are different across history but have one "precise and determined function within society" (ibid.), namely in opening a "space for play" (Iser xi) and in either creating

a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory [...], [o]r else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation (Foucault 51).

By opening up a new space which "cannot have nothing to do with reality: it must relate to our world, or it would be nothing but nonsense" (Hunt, *Alternative Worlds* 170). Fantasy is able to become a retreat from, a commentary or a satire on real life, potentially being able to re-negotiate or deconstruct prevalent discourses by offering and exercising alternatives as the relationship between the two worlds is bi-directional: "On one hand, we 'import' into fiction beliefs that we have about the real world and on the other hand, we 'export' into our real world the 'principles' suggested by fiction" (Jacquenod in Cantrell 26). Thus, fantasy literature, by abandoning "the strictly mimetic influence [...]" permits a playfulness which deconstructs the world of stable meanings" (Ang, *The Widening World of Children's Literature* 100), transforming the public space (cf. Derrida, *For What Tomorrow?* 127), offering "possible states of affaires" (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 2.04) or "alternative ways things might have been" (Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* 82) that allow for the confrontation between what is fictionally possible yet logically impossible, thus widening young adult literature to include adult themes "too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children's book" (Pullman in Hunt 122).

When it comes to age in fantasy literature, it has to be noted that literature uses so-called archetypes, a term coined by Carl Gustav Jung. An archetype is, more or less, a simplified image of a person (Jung 227) often used in literature. Archetypes are, similarly to stereotypes, equipped with a "positive, favourable, bright side that points upwards [and] one that points downwards, partly negative and unfavourable, partly chthonic" (Jung 227). They must be easily recognisable as what they are, being equipped with a set of skills and character traits that are already known to the reader. Overall, however, they are neutral or productive images, which see an interaction between the prototype model, or archetype, and the reader's various "memories of actual people or events" (Fiske and Cuddy 5). In contrast to stereotypes, archetypes are often stable concepts, as Jung notes that "an image can be considered archetypal when it can be shown to exist in the records of human history, in identical form and with the same meaning" (Jung, *Collected Edition* 352). Yet, archetypes also need to be used repeatedly in order to remain as such.. For older characters there are some often intersecting roles

or archetypes available. One of the more prevalent ones is certainly the wise old man and his female equivalent the wise old woman. Both are spiritual archetypes in “the guise of a magician, doctor, priest, teacher, professor, grandfather, or any other person possessing authority” who always appears when “insight, understanding, good advice, determination, planning, etc., are needed but cannot be mustered on one’s own resources” (Jung 216; Garry and El-Shamy 342). He or she often appears at the beginning of a hero’s journey, as Campbell notes that “the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer” with magical means of knowledge of how to accomplish the task (Campbell in Garry 342). Apart from this function, the wise old man and the wise old woman do have a moral dimension as “[they] will test a character and then reward or punish that character. Kindness and charity are rewarded while churlishness and selfishness are punished” (Garry 345). Yet, the old man and the old woman retain an in-humane element, because as Jung notes in “his magical powers and his spiritual superiority suggest that, in good and bad alike, he is outside, or above, or below the human level” (Jung, *Collected Works* 230).

The following chapter will analyse in how far these archetypes and stereotypes are used, replicated and constructed in *His Dark Materials* and *Harry Potter*; in how far the series’ reject these ideas and in how far they are able to create and offer more positive, human-like and adaptable images for old age. Thus, the older characters will first be described and positioned, for instance, in terms of whether they adhere to discourses prevalent in society and if so which ones, before they are evaluated according to the questions posed above. Some more general questions and lines of pattern are, furthermore, taken from McGuire’s ‘Ageism in Literature Analysis Form’:

- the older character plays a vital part in the story
- the older character’s personality is fully developed
- the older character is self-reliant as opposed to being dependent
- the older character’s physical appearance is fully described
- stereotypical adjectives such as: old, sad, poor are not frequently or exclusively used in this book to refer to older people
- the older character’s occupation is fully defined
- the older character’s occupation is a meaningful one
- if not employed, the older character is engaged in worthwhile activities
- the older character is from outside the family unit
- the older person is a three-dimensional character (206).

### 3.1 ...in *His Dark Materials*

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a series of three novels, namely *Northern Lights* (in following referred to as *NL*), *The Subtle Knife* (*SK*) and *The Amber Spyglass* (*AS*), can be defined as a portal fantasy, in which the character passes through a portal into an unknown and new place (cf. Mendelsohn, *Rhetorics* 55) as well as a scripted series with continuing characters, and in which "a conflict and a cast of characters whose task it to resolve it" are introduced (Maund, 'Reading the Fantasy Series' 147). Thus, Lyra, one of the series' main protagonists, hides in a wardrobe within a forbidden retiring room in Oxford and learns of the conflict that sets her on her following journey. In comparison, and much more clearly a portal, Will, the series' second protagonist, enters a new world through an inconspicuous window and embarks on his journey from there on. The series also follows some key conventions of young adult and fantasy literature, involving

young protagonists, sometimes troubled, who have an important mission that may be addressed through a crucial otherworldly adventure, an excursion into an invented world that may have well defined boundaries (possibly mappable) or more abstract configurations, adult and other guides who offer information and assistance to major characters, perilous journeys that provoke mind and life altering events and consequences [and] a return to the primary world [...] (Smith, 'Tradition, Transformation and the bold Emergence' 136)

Topic wise, the trilogy locates and speaks of the "existential state of humanity at the beginning of the new millennium, a condition where 'the maps no longer fit the territories'" (Houston in Hunt 123) and in which seemingly stable concepts and institutions are seen as sinister, oppressive and dogmatic, and, thus unable to initiate change on their own. Apart from Pullman's highly criticised critique of organised religion, the series touches upon various issues such as innocence, sexual awakening, the dichotomy between good and evil, morality, science, traditions as well as a deeply embedded ambiguity in all of these issues. Nothing is truly binary but involves multiple positions. Thus, and by taking his key ideas from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, of which the series is a re-telling, William Blake's poetry and Heinrich Kleist's essay "On Marionette Theater", Pullman realigns the 'hero' and 'villain' roles, as "his 'Satan' (Lord Asriel) and the 'fallen' angels are engaged in a morally justified battle to unseat a corrupt 'Authority'" (Hunt 124).

The series is even more ambiguous when it comes to time and space, as it "inhabits a number of alternative worlds, settings that mix the familiar and the startling, blending features from the historical late nineteenth and twentieth centuries with others from an imagined 'elsewhere' or a hypothetical near future" (Hunt 126). Thus, the first part takes place "in a universe like ours, but different in many ways. The second volume moves between three universes; the universe of volume one; the universe we know; and a third one which differs from ours in many ways again. The final part moves between several universes" (Pullman, *NL* n.p.). Within the first universe, or Lyra's universe, "time is edgy [...] as

certain details - 'naphtha lights', zeppelins, and the powerful centralisation of authority in the Calvinistic 'Consistorial Court of Discipline' are indicative of earlier technologies and

eras, whereas some aspects of scientific knowledge (the Barnard-Stokes hypothesis, for instance) are recognisably derived from today's quantum physics (Hunt 127).

One of its most crucial differences to other works of fantasy, and one of the main features of the series, is the doubling of the human form, psyche and self-love in the form of so called dæmons, an animal shape with the power of reason and speech. These animal shapes directly correspond to what Jung called *animus* and *anima*, as they are usually of the opposite gender even though some people have a dæmon of their own gender (cf. Chabon, 'Dust and Dæmons' 6). Therefore, nearly everyone in Lyra's universe carries both a female and a male element within themselves (Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious' 31) as Will Parry's father John discovers upon entering Lyra's world: "Can you imagine my astonishment, in turn, at learning that part of my own nature was female, and bird-formed, and beautiful?" (Pullman, SK 128). Yet, similarly it indicates a manifestation of the cartesian mind and body dualism, in which the soul exists outside the body, even if a dæmon does possess a certain materiality. In other universes, in which this doubling does not occur, characters still retain both a female and male element within as "dæmons [in these worlds] are a silent voice in the mind and no more" (ibid.). The separation, or simply the act of not having a dæmon, is seen as unnatural, disgusting, repugnant and sickening as a "human being with no dæmon was like someone without a face, or with their ribs laid open and their heart torn out: something unnatural and uncanny that belonged to the world of night-ghasts, not the waking world of sense" (Pullman, NL 107). Furthermore, these shapes are, up to a point, ambiguous beings. In childhood they can change at will before settling, i. e. taking one specific shape, in adolescence with the onset of puberty (cf. Pullman, NL 83). This shape leads to

[k]nowing what kind of person you are. Take old Belisaria. She's a seagull, and that means I'm a kind of seagull too. I'm not grand and splendid nor beautiful, but I'm a tough old thing and I can survive anywhere and always find a bit of food and company. That's worth knowing, that is. And when your dæmon settles, you'll know the sort of person you are. (Pullman, NL 83)

The person, however, cannot influence this shape as "[t]here's plenty of folk as'd like to have a lion as a dæmon and they end up with a poodle" (ibid.). Dæmons, therefore represent the character of the person by their specific shapes. Moreover, dæmons are also an indicator of class, for instance, most servants' dæmons are dogs, and the more superior the servant is, the more superior the dog (cf. Pullman, NL 3, 5).

The second literary invention of Pullman is Dust, Rusakov particles (cf. Pullman, NL 4-6) or what the Dark Matter Research Unit (cf. Pullman, SK 143-145) calls Shadows and dark matter and what the Mulefa, one of the non-human beings within the series, call 'sraf'. These elementary particles are conscious, able to confer consciousness upon certain species (cf. Pullman, AS 93) and specially attracted to adults (ibid.). *His Dark Materials* revolves around the matter of preventing Dust to attach itself to children by separating them from their dæmons, of finding Dust, of protecting it and finally of stopping it from leaving (Pullman, NL 168, 197; AS 93, 95-97). Yet, this concept does not feature heavily in the analysis in this chapter which is why only such a brief overview is given even if the concept is important for the plot of the series.

Within *His Dark Materials* the roles within the life course are, on first glance, easily identified: the focus lies on young adulthood and adulthood, as most of the series is told from the point of view of both Lyra, who is 12 and 13 throughout, and Will who is 13. Thus, the perceptions of others are very much filtered by an, often unchecked, gaze of youth. Moreover, young and middle aged characters are much more favourably looked upon. Lord Asriel, Lyra's father, for instance is described as having "a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronise or pity. All his movements were large and perfectly balanced, like those of a wild animal, and when he appeared in a room like this, he seemed a wild animal held in a cage too small for it" (Pullman, NL 7). Mrs. Coulter, Lyra's mother, is glamorous, adventurous, "beautiful and young [...] and her dæmon [...] a golden monkey" (Pullman, NL 33-34) and both characters are fierce, powerful and able, commanding, manipulating and seducing others to drive their plans forward (cf. Pullman NL, 7, 33, 38, 181, 196; SK 21, 23-24, 187; AS 138, 164, 168-170). Apart from Lyra and Will, it is these two characters that bring about the end of the main conflict (cf. Zettel, 'Dust to Dust' 46). Additionally, it is Lyra and Will who are active agents, even though their movements are largely lead by a prophesy (cf. Pullman, NL 16). Yet, within the group of the young, including children and adults, a chasm is visible as children are often left out of decisions, are uncouth, half-wild, half-civilized (cf. Pullman, NL 10; SK 100) but often no less manipulative and deceitful as the adults. They are, exemplified in the changing nature of their dæmons, unfinished adults. It is thus adulthood, as typified in Mrs. Coulter and Lord Asriel, that is valued most within the majority of the universes<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, within the group of major characters, elderly adults are virtually absent, which is why the focus turns towards more minor characters.

In this respect, humans, humanoid and non-human species must be distinguished. Humans refer to those beings without magic, living in Lyra's and Will's and other worlds. Humanoid beings are those of angels, Gallivespians and witches, which do either possess various magical properties, are differently sized, are distinguished by their longevity or their ephemerality or are not quite material but still human shaped. Finally non-human beings are those who do not possess a human shape, such as cliff-ghasts, panserbjørne, and Mulefa, but are nevertheless equipped with a character, the ability of reason and speech and producing culture. First, the chapter will focus on the latter category by focussing on one character of each non-human species, moving on to those beings, that provide a different outlook on ageing through life, before settling on the category of human beings.

### 3.1.1 Creatures vs. People – Non-Humans

Cliff-ghasts are vulture-like flying creatures, "half the size of a man, with leathery wings and hooked claws [...] a flat head, with bulging eyes and a wide frog mouth, [from which] came wafts of abominable stink" (Pullman, NL 159) that live in the North (cf. *ibid.* 112). They are able to speak in a primitive language (cf. Pullman, AS 20) and are easy to fool. When foxes overhear Lyra and Iorek Byrnison, one

<sup>13</sup> The only exception to the rule is the world of Cittàgasse, in which spectres feed on the consciousness of adults, while children are exempt from them (cf. Pullman, SK 82). Thus, as children are to a large extent the only beings able to stay alive within the city, they are used to scavenge food, clothes and other things and are able to support adults.

of the panserbjørne, Iorek notes that cliff-ghasts are said to believe the lies the foxes speak “and never learn from their disappointment” (Pullman, AS 19). Moreover, they seem to be nesting in the cliffs and their source of knowledge, if it is not attained from the foxes or by overhearing others, comes from the oldest cliff-ghost of all, one they call ‘grandfather’. This oldest of all

was blind, and they were bringing him food: some stinking carrion from far below. And they were asking him for guidance.  
 ‘Grandfather,’ they said, ‘how far back does your memory go?’  
 ‘Way, way back. Back long before humans,’ he said, and his voice was soft and cracked and frail. ‘Is it true that the greatest battle ever known is coming soon, Grandfather?’  
 ‘Yes, children,’ he said. (Pullman, SK 164)

The respect brought to him by others, thus, does not relate to his prowess to hunt but to his knowledge and experience, which gives guidance and retains a prophetic nature.

In comparison, Mulefa<sup>14</sup> although looking very much different from animals in Lyra’s or Will’s universe, as they grow “in a diamond formation: two in the centre, one at the front, and one under the tail, [...] on their front and rear single legs, a wheel [...] looking like deers or antelopes [...]” with sharp looking horns and trunks (Pullman, AS 36–37), have a more evolved culture and speech and are equipped with “intelligence and curiosity in their gaze” (ibid.). Mary Malone, one of the central figures of *Amber Spyglass*, taking up the role as the proverbial serpent within the novels, notes that the language of the Mulefa is part gesture, part sound. She observes

that their trunks were playing a part in communication, too. A movement of the trunk would modify the meaning of a sound, so the word that sounded like “chuh” meant *water* when it was accompanied by a sweep of the trunk from left to right, *rain* when the trunk curled up at the tip, *sadness* when it curled under, and *young shoots of grass* when it made a quick flick to the left (Pullman, AS 52, emphasis in the original).

By imitating these movements and sounds she is able to communicate with the wheeled animals, even going as far as compiling a dictionary (ibid.). Furthermore, Mulefa live in villages of “twenty or thirty huts, roughly grouped in a circle, made of [...] wooden beams covered with a kind of wattle-and-daub mixture on the walls and thatch on the roofs”, leading Mary Malone to the assertion that

they had language, and they had fire, and they had society. And about then she found an adjustment being made in her mind, as the word *creatures* became the word *people*. These beings weren’t human, but they were *people*, she told herself; it’s not *them*, they’re *us* (Pullman, AS 51, emphasis in the original).

As a people, they do also possess a vast memory of their own history and culture as “if they had forgotten nothing and everything they had ever known was available immediately for reference” (Pullman, AS 54). Yet, the distinction of ‘them’ and ‘us’ is not quite as easy as that as Mulefa live in unison with nature and their society can be considered a primitive one. Primitive cultures are “characterised by features that may include lack of a written language, relative isolation, small population, relatively

<sup>14</sup> Mulefa is the plural form and describes the group, whereas zalif is the singular and describes the individual (Pullman, AS 52).

simple social institutions and technology, and a generally slow rate of sociocultural change” (Service, ‘Primitive Cultures’ par.1). Even if the Mulefa are able to use a form of technology, they

had little use for metal. They did extraordinary things with stone and wood and cord and shell and horn, but what metals they had were hammered from native nuggets of copper and other metals that they found in the sand of the river, and they were never used for toolmaking. [Metal was] ornamental (Pullman, AS 92).

They also live isolated (cf. Pullman, AS 96) and in relatively small communities. As described above, there are twenty to thirty huts to be found. As these beings live in monogamous relationships, probably with one to two children (cf. Pullman, AS 52-53), the communities’ numbers should range from 60 (two adults, twenty huts, one child each) to 120 Mulefa (two adults, thirty huts, two children each). Thus, they do not form imagined communities (cf. Anderson 5-6), but communities in which everybody knows each other. In the case of the Mulefa, sociocultural change is not observable. As mentioned before, they possess a cultural memory that harks back to the time of their emergence and is stored, taught, transmitted and often cultivated and memorised by specialists, “such as narrators, bards, mask-carvers, and others” (Assmann, ‘Communicative and Cultural Memory’ 111). Moreover, cultural memory exists “in the forms of narratives, songs, dances, rituals, masks, and symbols” (Assmann, 113, 115). The social rank of such a specialist amidst the Mulefa is a high one. After seeing Dust and having acquired the means of observing it, Mary is brought to the zalif Sattamax, who, to her, is a stranger. He “was older than anyone she’d seen so far: at the base of his trunk was a scatter of white hairs, and he moved stiffly, as if he had arthritis” (Pullman, AS 97). The others Mulefa seem to move around him with care and Mary, focusing on Dust, notes that “the old zalif’s Shadow cloud was so rich and complex that Mary herself felt respect, even though she knew so little of what it meant” (ibid.). His rank as a chief-like figure is further emphasised as the crowd falls silent the moment he is ready to speak (cf. ibid.). In comparison to the cracked and frail voice of the oldest cliff-ghost, his voice “was deep, the tones rich and varied, the gestures of his trunk low and graceful” (ibid.).

Even though both elders are the keepers and specialists of their communities’ specific culture, functioning “as a storehouse of knowledge about such things as family lineage, religious rituals, lore and myth that explain tribal origins and identity as well as in-depth knowledge about the environment and how to exploit it for survival” (‘Status of Older People: Tribal Societies’ sec. 7), and even though they are similarly described with the stereotypical, stigmatised markers often linked to ageing such as dependency, blindness, frailty, white hair and sickness in terms of arthritis, there are still differences to be seen. On the one hand, the cliff-ghost is largely dependent on its relations to others in order to survive, as it is old, blind and, thus, unable to gather food for himself. As this seems to be one of the cliff-ghost’s main activities, he is very much disengaged from the others who do not show the same markers of illness and age. Moreover, as one of the witches stumbles across the nest to which other ghosts bring food, the oldest seems to be in some form segregated from the others. On the other hand, Sattamax, who, in comparison to the cliff-ghost possesses an actual name that exceeds his function in the community, is described as sick and white haired, but nothing hints at him being

dependent, which implies that he is self-reliant even if others move around him with care. In addition, his voice and the graceful movements contrast not only the frailty of the cliff-ghost's voice but also his own aged exterior. While Sattamax is truly respected within his community and sought out for guidance, the cliff-ghost, even though he is asked for advice, is only brought "a stinking carrion" for food, pointing at the fact, that while the others do care about him their care or respect might not be quite benign. Thus, while the cliff-ghost as well as Sattamax are constructed largely within the discourse of biomedical ageing that links illness and biological decline, with its specific age markers, with each other in order to define age and the resulting social function of elders, their mental prowess of remembering elevates them to an important rank within their respective cultures. Furthermore, even though he suffers from something similar to arthritis, the mental agility that Sattamax possesses is underlined by his movements and his voice which offer a glimpse of health, vigour and strength underneath the degenerating exterior.

Regarding the North's panserbjørne, throughout the course of the series only two are referred to by name: Iorek Byrnison and Iofur Raknison. Both signify "two kinds of beardom opposed [...], two futures, two destinies. Iofur had begun to take [the bears] in one direction, and Iorek would take them in another, and in the same moment, one future would close forever as the other began to unfold" (Pullman, NL 173). Whereas Iofur is sleek and powerful, "immense in his strength and health, splendidly armoured, proud and king-like" (Pullman, NL 173), but also cruel, power hungry, deceitful, vain and easy to fool (cf. Pullman, NL 112, 157, 169–173), Iorek is, in comparison, "smaller, [...] and poorly equipped, his armour rusty and dented", temperamental and vengeful, he also embodies the true nature of the bears, proud, being unable to be tricked (cf. Pullman, NL 157), able to work metal, following a very strict code of conduct, not betraying a promise he has made (cf. Pullman, AS 45) and using an armour made for himself, as a "bear's armour is his soul" (Pullman, NL 98). Iofur, albeit a prince and later king,

is clever in a human way; he makes alliances and treaties; he lives not as bears do, in ice forts, but in a new-built palace; he talks of exchanging ambassadors with human nations and developing the fire mines with the help of human engineers....He is very skilful and subtle (Pullman, NL 98).

He possesses a "face [that] was much more mobile and expressive, with a kind of humanness in it [like] a man looking out of his eyes [...], a subtle politician used to power" (Pullman, NL 167). In this quest of power he built a palace of gold and marble and "preposterous decoration: the walls were rich with gilt plasterwork, some of which was already peeling off or crumbling with damp, and the florid carpets were trodden with filth" (Pullman, NL 166). It is these markers of humanness that Iorek Byrnison seeks to "tear down [...] the palace, that perfumed house of mockery and tinsel, and hurl the gold and marble into the sea. Iron is bear-metal. Gold is not. Iofur Raknison has polluted Svalbard" (Pullman, NL 173).

The bears of the North are, with their ability to work metal, to build palaces, to speak, to reason, and to create a society with clear ranks, the most evolved society of non-human beings within the series. It is unclear whether Iorek or Iofur take up similar roles as the oldest cliff-ghost or Sattamax, as

the storehouses of their people's knowledge, however, they are respected and looked up to as the kings of their community. It is furthermore not distinguishable how old exactly both bears are or how they age, as Lee Scoresby meets Iorek during the early 1960s (Pullman, *Once upon a time in the North* 176), a time during which the bear had already been exiled from his society (cf. Pullman, NL 157). It can be assumed that Iorek is at least 40 years old as the events of the series take place in 1997. Yet, Lee Scoresby indicates that Iorek is much older (cf. Pullman, NL 96), whereas the bear himself displays markers of the archetype of a wise old man, as he "sees through the gloomy situation of the hero who has got himself into trouble, or at least can give him such information as will help him on his journey" (Jung 221), appearing "when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reaction or a lucky idea [...] can extricate him" (Jung 217), embodying "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help" (Jung 222). This is reflected in a conversation between Will and Iorek during the course of *The Amber Spyglass* in which he is first reluctant to repair the Subtle Knife, cautioning Will that "[w]ith it you can do strange things. What you don't know is what the knife does on its own. Your intentions may be good. The knife has intentions, too" (75) before adding, after the reforging of the knife, that "[m]aybe I should not have mended it. I'm troubled, and I have never been troubled before, never in doubt. Now I am full of doubt. Doubt is a human thing, not a bear thing. If I am becoming human, something's wrong, something's bad. And I've made it worse" (80). Further on, he brings about a change in attitude in Will (cf. 81), equipping him with the mental capabilities to use the knife again and to help Lyra on her way. Whereas, in character and by others, Iorek Byrnison might be defined as old, taking up the mantle of the wise old man, a closer look shows that apart from having attained wisdom, he shows no other markers of age. Thus, it could be said that he defies in part both the role of a wise old man as well as a discourse focussed on the physical and mental decline that is said to occur during ageing by being more of a wise man than an old and wise man. While he seems to accumulate wisdom over the years, he does not age per se, but retains his immense physical strength. Pinpointing his exact age, or at least the age cohort within which he moves, which has been comparatively easy in terms of the cliff-ghasts and Mulefa, as they are either explicitly referred to as old, having specific stigmata of age or are deferred to in a specific manner reserved for older characters, e. g. by care, is further complicated because the traditional stigmata such as wrinkles, white hair, sagging body parts would be meaningless, or even absurd, on a polar bear. As he is neither sick, nor blind, which in part would exempt him from helping, rescuing and guiding Lyra and Will, Iorek Byrnison seems to be an ageless, wise and guiding creature.

Overall, all three communities propose their equivalents to a powerful, older character with authority which relies on some form of strength and does represent the emotional expression of power (Sennett, *Authority* 4) but which is differently manifested in the three beings. The cliff-ghast draws his power not from his strength and prowess in hunt or fight but from the prophetic nature of his memory, comparative eloquence and his experience, which is legitimated by the affectionate term 'grandfather', being "infused with a sense of emotional potency" (Sennett 78), but could also be the expression of

false respect. The Mulefa are a less primitive culture than the cliff-ghasts but a more primitive culture than the panserbjørne or the humans. Their community that is “very simple in organization and with relationships on a personal level [and in which] individual reputation is important to status”, could also be described as what Berndt and Berndt termed a gerontocracy, a society “in [which] elderly men dominate the political life [...] and have the most power and status” (Berndt and Berndt in Vincent 35; 38). Sattamax receives his power and status mostly due to his age, as around him Dust gathers in a dense cloud, a matter that is attracted by adults and becomes denser and denser the more knowledge the beings acquire (cf. Markman, ‘Science, Technology and the Danger of Dæmons’ 66), due to his status as the most knowledgeable of them all who is also the keeper and specialist of their traditions and stories. Iorek, in comparison, with his people creeping towards a rather human community and social hierarchy, acquires his power not through age but through him being a father figure to Lyra (cf. Pullman, NL 183), “wealthy and high-ranking” (Pullman, NL 112), powerful in combat and later on through his rank as king, which grounds his authority on a rational legal basis (cf. Weber, *Economy and Society* 215).

### 3.1.2 Between Mind and Matter –Humanoid Beings

The question of ageing and not ageing hints at the group of humanoid beings that populate the worlds: witches, angels and Gallivespians. In these beings, various ways of bodily materiality, transcendence and longevity are explored. The latter species, the Gallivespians, shall, however, only be named but not further explored as their life span only encloses nine years and “they die in full-fledged vigour of their prime” (Pullman, AS 75), old age being a category entirely absent from their culture, which can, therefore, be seen as a solely young or youthful culture.

Starting with non-transcendent beings which resemble humans very closely, the focus will now rest on the witches within the series. Witches in *His Dark Materials* are grouped together in all-female clans, each being led by a queen (cf. Pullman, SK 30), and they possibly exist in each universe. They do possess dæmons in the form of birds which can travel separately from their human counterparts, leading other humans or dæmons to shamefully avert their eyes upon seeing either of them without the other (cf. Pullman, NL 107). Most of them are “vivid and passionate [...] beautiful, proud, and pitiless” (ibid.) and fierce, young and fair (cf. Pullman, NL 150), although it is mentioned that elderly witches do exist (cf. Pullman, SK 32). Moreover, their appearance is deceiving as Lyra notes in *Northern Lights*:

“How long do witches live, Serafina Pekkala? Farder Coram says hundreds of years. But you don’t look old at all.”

“I am three hundred years or more. Our oldest witch mother is nearly a thousand. One day, Yambe-Akka will come for her. One day she’ll come for me. She is the goddess of the dead. She comes to you smiling and kindly, and you know it is time to die.” (155)

Thus, their age may range up to a thousand years, while their exterior, up to an unnamed point, remains youthful. The goddess of death, similarly, is very old, “older than the tundra. Perhaps, for her, witches’ lives are as brief as men’s are to us” (ibid. 156), and seems, in exterior, ageless as Serafina Pekkala is able to imitate her easily by “smiling happily, because Yambe-Akka was merry and light-

hearted and her visits were gifts of joy” (Pullman, *SK* 25). The briefness of human relationships and lives is often contrasted with those of the witches, who in character and often in behaviour and apart from the magical element they possess, resemble humans very closely. This is most vividly described when Lyra ponders Searafina Pekkala’s relationship to Farder Coram, stating that “[h]e was growing old; he was an old broken man; and she would be young for generations” (Pullman, *NL* 150). It is this specific difference of the young witches, able to stay young for generations while their male children and partners age, that is seen as one of the distinctive features in this juxtaposition. Yet, the archetype of the witch as a “figure, with [an] emphasis on death, injury, and destruction”, “enchant[ing] or transform[ing] a person, animal, or thing [with] a negative effect” (Garry and El-Shamy 166) is forsaken as the witches from Lyra’s perspective are seen as, guiding, helping and healing beings (cf. *SK* 155, 165, 184). Furthermore, although they do live at the borders of civilisation, they have not been “ostracised because her ways stand in opposition to accepted values” (Kushner, ‘Mothers, Witches, and the Power of Archetypes’, sec. Witches), they are, on the contrary, very much involved in human matters and clan matters. For the purpose of this thesis, however, it is the dissociation of the witch as being associated with “age, ugliness, infertility, wickedness, demonic powers” (Hazan 14) which is compelling. Instead, witches are connected with youth, sexual prowess, seduction, morals and magic. They, in contrast to the angels, propose a whole being whose mind and body are a unity but whose bodies age far more slowly. Thus, the notion of a biomedical discourse, that our life is a story of inevitable biological decline told in ever higher numbers, is negated. This negation is, in turn, personified in the witches, who do age but whose bodies remain youthful far longer, reversing a dualism of mind and body that often sees a youthful self within an old and problematic body, furthermore, further underlining the artificial nature of the chronological ordering of the life course as it is the witches, ageing and yet not ageing, who extend the life course to hundreds and thousands of years. Moreover, their respective identities, personified in the unchanging nature of their *dæmons*, propose that the self during the process of ageing does not change per se but remains the same throughout. This is not quite unproblematic. The biomedical discourse suggests that ageing could be slowed down by a healthy lifestyle or by “the exercise of willpower and choice” (Hubble and Tew, *Ageing, Narrative and Identity* 67), leading to the notion that some people are able to age successfully while simultaneously presuming “the existence of ‘unproductive’ and ‘unsuccessful’ ageing” (ibid.) in others. In ageing very slowly and, therefore, successfully, witches mirror this approach by proposing that staying young in very old age is possible.

Throughout the course of the series, the witches and angels are often only mentioned in passing, yet the witches’ culture is more explicitly described than the presumed community of the angels. It is not quite clear whether they live together in groups, although it is suggested that two angels, Baruch and Balthamos, are companions. Angels are described as “[b]eings of pure spirit” (Pullman, *SK* 29), shining (ibid. 81), “not beings of flesh like us [...]. Or maybe their flesh is more finely drawn than ours, lighter and clearer” (ibid. 82), “Watchers, or bene elim” (ibid. 84), ancient beings (ibid. 85), possessing a form more “like architecture than organism, like huge structures composed of intelligence and feeling” (ibid.). They shine “not as if they were burning but as if, wherever they were and however dark the

night, sunlight was shining on them. They were like humans, but winged, and much taller; and, [...] they were naked [...] [t]heir wings sprang from their shoulder blades, and their backs and chests were deeply muscled” (ibid. 84). Yet, as a witch’s encounter with the angels shows, they only possess a human shape, because the beholder expects them to be so (cf. ibid. 85). They are, however, not here nor there as they have no true flesh and are composed of particles of Dust (cf. Pullman, AS 7) and are more obscure the closer they come, but far better visible during dusk (cf. ibid. 7–9). Will notes later on that humans are far stronger than some angels (cf. ibid. 15, 169, 191), leading angels to avoid hand-to-hand combat, though they long for true flesh as “[i]t would be sort of ecstasy for them to have our flesh and our senses” (ibid. 191). This is echoed by Serafina Pekkala who feels “nothing but compassion for those great watchers. How much they must miss, never to feel the earth beneath their feet, or the wind in their hair, or the tingle of the starlight on their bare skin!” (Pullman, SK 166). Some of them, as Balthamos tells Will, were men or women before they became angels:

“Well, you see, I can’t tell. Are you a man? You sound like a man.”  
 “Baruch was a man. I was not. Now he is angelic.”  
 [...] “So he was a man,” he [Will] went on, “and then... Do people become angels when they die? Is that what happens?”  
 “Not always. Not in the vast majority of cases... Very rarely.”  
 “When was he alive, then?”  
 “Four thousand years ago, more or less. I am much older.”  
 “And did he live in my world? Or Lyra’s? Or this one?”  
 “In yours. But there are myriads of worlds. You know that” (Pullman, AS 9).

How visible they are to people and therefore how strong they are physically depends on their rank as angels. Thus, Xaphania, another angel and the one who leads the angels into rebellion and alignment with Lord Asriel, is “visible by a shimmering, disconcerting light that seemed to come from somewhere else” (Pullman, AS 84) as she is of much higher rank than Baruch or Balthamos, who, however, become clearer when Will watches them shrouded by smoke from the corner of his eye (ibid. 13). Xaphania, is described as “tall, naked, winged, and her lined face was older than that of any living creature” and yet “[i]t was impossible to tell if she was old or young, but her expression was austere and compassionate [...]” (Pullman, AS 87, 206). Moreover, angels are able to penetrate the consciousness of other beings as shown in the aforementioned encounter between a witch and angels, in which the witch did not “know how far their awareness spread out beyond her like filamentary tentacles to the remotest corners of universes she had never dreamed of” (Pullman, AS 85). Thus, they are ancient and yet ageless beings that have long abandoned their materiality and simply possess consciousness. However, throughout the series, one angel in particular is referred to explicitly: “the Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty—those were all names he gave himself” (Pullman, AS 16). He styles himself as the first angel who created all of those that followed, but he

was an angel [...] – the first angel, true, the most powerful, but he was formed of Dust [...] and Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself. Matter loves matter. It seeks to know more about itself, and Dust is formed. The first angels condensed out of Dust, and the Authority was the first of all. He told those who came after him that he

had created them, but it was a lie. One of those who came later was wiser than he was, and she found out the truth, so he banished her (ibid.).

He is furthermore described as powerful, deceitful and cruel, for instance as the promise of Heaven turns out to be a drab, limbo like place that is haunted by harpies equipped with the “the power to see the worst in every one” (ibid. 134-135). One of his most distinguishing features, however, is his age. The oldest cliff-ghast describes him as “age-old, [...] and His troops are frightened, and complacent where they’re not frightened” (SK 164); Mrs. Coulter outright doubts whether he is still alive and whether it might be better to dispose of him:

“Well, where is God,” said Mrs. Coulter, “if he’s alive? And why doesn’t he speak anymore? At the beginning of the world, God walked in the Garden and spoke with Adam and Eve. Then he began to withdraw, and he forbade Moses to look at his face. Later, in the time of Daniel, he was aged—he was the Ancient of Days. Where is he now? Is he still alive, at some inconceivable age, decrepit and demented, unable to think or act or speak and unable to die, a rotten hulk? And if that is his condition, wouldn’t it be the most merciful thing, the truest proof of our love for God, to seek him out and give him the gift of death?” (AS 137)

Moreover, he has withdrawn from reigning, leaving “the dirty work of burning heretics and hanging witches [...] to his priests” (AS 156) and the active reign of his kingdom to his regent Metatron, who is described as “far, far worse” (ibid.), planning to take over more and more power, intending

to intervene directly in human life. Imagine that, [...] permanent Inquisition, worse than anything the Consistorial Court of Discipline could dream up, staffed by spies and traitors in every world and directed personally by the intelligence that’s keeping that mountain aloft... The old Authority at least had the grace to withdraw” (ibid.).

The Authority himself is concealed for most of the series within “his citadel, his palace. When the Authority was young, it wasn’t surrounded by clouds, but as time passed, he gathered them around him more and more thickly. No one has seen the summit for thousands of years. So his citadel is known now as the Clouded Mountain” (ibid. 16), which is “less like a rock than like a force field, manipulating space itself to enfold and stretch and layer it into galleries and terraces, chambers and colonnades and watchtowers of air and light and vapour” (ibid. 156). Within this moving entity, he “dwells in a chamber at the heart of the Mountain” (ibid. 16), invisible to all. However, as the last battle between Lord Asriel, the leader of those wanting to create the Republic of Heaven, and Metatron’s troops defending the Kingdom of Heaven draws closer, the Authority, unbeknownst to all, is re-located. This act as well as the Authority himself is unknowingly observed by Mrs. Coulter:

Mrs. Coulter was close enough to see the being in the litter: an angel, she thought, and indescribably aged. He wasn’t easy to see, because the litter was enclosed all around with crystal that glittered and threw back the enveloping light of the Mountain, but she had the impression of terrifying decrepitude, of a face sunken in wrinkles, of trembling hands, and of a mumbling mouth and rheumy eyes. The aged being gestured shakily at the intention craft, and cackled and muttered to himself, plucking incessantly at his beard, and then threw back his head and uttered a howl of such anguish that Mrs. Coulter had to cover her ears. But evidently the bearers had a task to do, for they gathered themselves and moved farther along the terrace, ignoring the cries and mumbles from inside the litter (Pullman, AS 165).

The description is in stark contrast to the previous descriptions of a powerful and crafty being who convinced his following angels of being the creator. The archetype of the creator which features in literature, a being often integrating “opposites and contraries into one unity, being simultaneously male and female, visible and invisible, first and last, creator and destroyer, very near and very remote” (Garry and El-Shamy 3), who is self-created, dwelling ‘above’, representing “a perfect state of being that contains the opposites and which is therefore self-sufficient, content, and independent” (Freeman in Garry and El-Shamy 6) and “involved in such activities as creating, healing, redeeming, nurturing, and governing” (Garry and El-Shamy 4), is partly abandoned. Even though the Authority does combine opposites, being there but being invisible, being matter and a being of spirit and being self-created, he is cast, instead, as the personification of mental and bodily decline, a truly horrifying picture of dependency and degeneration. Not only is he carried, but he is wrinkly, trembling, mumbling incoherently, demented and plucking at his beard. He is imagined as barely human. This picture is further strengthened, when Will and Lyra happen to come across him:

Will saw her hands pressing against the crystal, trying to reach in to the angel and comfort him; because he was so old, and he was terrified, crying like a baby and cowering away into the lowest corner.

“He must be so old—I’ve never seen anyone suffering like that—oh, Will, can’t we let him out?” Will cut through the crystal in one movement and reached in to help the angel out. Demented and powerless, the aged being could only weep and mumble in fear and pain and misery, and he shrank away from what seemed like yet another threat (Pullman, AS 171).

The shrinking away in fear, the weeping and crying, which is expressed as “crying like a baby”, align the Authority not only with an animal nature, as he cowers from perceived threats, but also with an infant, unable to speak, reduced to the most immediate and base sensations and reactions. Furthermore, his death is anticlimactic and not quite the fierce battle between Asriel and the Authority hinted at before, as he simply dissolves upon being freed by Will and Lyra:

The shaking hand seized his and feebly held on. The old one was uttering a wordless groaning whimper that went on and on, and grinding his teeth, and compulsively plucking at himself with his free hand; but as Lyra reached in, too, to help him out, he tried to smile, and to bow, and his ancient eyes deep in their wrinkles blinked at her with innocent wonder. Between them they helped the ancient of days out of his crystal cell; it wasn’t hard, for he was as light as paper, and he would have followed them anywhere, having no will of his own, and responding to simple kindness like a flower to the sun. But in the open air there was nothing to stop the wind from damaging him, and to their dismay his form began to loosen and dissolve. Only a few moments later he had vanished completely, and their last impression was of those eyes, blinking in wonder, and a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief. Then he was gone: a mystery dissolving in mystery. (171-172)

Here again the ancient being is shown to possess no self-control or even consciousness, but is reduced to the same child- often bordering on animal-like state indicated by descriptions such as ‘innocent wonder’ or ‘blinking in wonder’ or hinted at in descriptions such as ‘no will of his own’, communicating in wails or whimpers or ‘responding to simple kindness like a flower to the sun’. He is, thus, defined as a creature rather than a conscious being, unable to speak and reason. Another aspect is the explicit description of his age is very much focused on the biological decline of his body. He is frail, light as paper, in pain and demented, neither capable of moving on his own nor of thinking for his own. This

description seems especially interesting in the light of the images painted of the other angels, which, as Xaphania seems to be equally old, are never old or declining but ancient yet ageless. Both are, thus, in clear contrast to each other, moreover, hinting at the moral character within. As mentioned in chapter two, old age has been used as an indicator of a decaying moral character (Featherstone and Hepworth in Tulle-Winton 69) as the exterior has been seen as an expression of the interior. Within the series, Xaphania is described as loyal to her cause and rightfully so, whereas the Authority is cast in negative terms. Thus, as her moral character is stable, prevailing over the centuries, her exterior mirrors that, hinting at her age but still portraying her as youthful. The Authority, on the other hand, is deceitful and generally not seen in a positive light, thus his exterior, because of his decaying morals and nature, shows these processes as well. This assumption is further reinforced as angels are not matter per se but beings of spirit and consciousness, hence, such decay should not be possible. The complete separation of matter and spirit can be seen as a hyperbole of the Cartesian mind and body dualism in which the body, the mask concealing the mind beneath, vanishes completely leaving only consciousness, no matter how fickle, behind. Yet, this apparent split comes with a twist as the description of the Authority shows, that a bodily description is needed as a mirror image still, leaving the body as the crisis point for ageing (cf. Estes et al. 37). Furthermore, Xaphania's, Baruch's and Balthamos' opposition to the Authority is mainly expressed in bodily images of youth and decline, strength and weakness, integration and segregation, humanisation and dehumanisation, self-reliance and dependence. The three aforementioned angels are all seemingly young. Baruch and Balthamos are described as young, powerfully built, wings snow-white and massive with a simple nature as well as slender, elegant, haughty but tender with an ardent sympathy "as if he would love all things if only his nature could let him forget their defects" (Pullman, AS 13). These pictures of perceived youthfulness and physical strength, similarly to those of Xaphania, are contrasted with the frail, thin, sickly and old exterior of the Authority, who, technically, has acquired far more power over time. Whereas the younger angels are all self-reliant, the Authority needs to be cared for, carried to another place, but is also met with carelessness from his subjects, as Metatron orders the angels to move him to safety "because he wanted him kept alive for a while yet; but rather than give him a bodyguard of many regiments [...] he had trusted to the obscurity of the storm" (ibid. 167). Furthermore, the Authority does not seem to be able to care for himself in any way any longer and is entirely dependent on others. In fact, even the reigns of the kingdom of heaven are held by Metatron who is a much younger, "dazzling [...] man-shaped, man-sized" being, "like a man in early middle age, tall, powerful, and commanding. Was he clothed? Did he have wings? [Mrs. Coulter] couldn't tell because of the force of his eyes" (Pullman, AS 166). The Authority is, to underline his loss of status and, by extension, his loss of humanity, also segregated from others by dwelling in the heart of his citadel which is, as another layer of obscurity, shrouded by thick clouds and thus impenetrable for the eyes of his subjects. In contrast, the other angels, be it Xaphania, Baruch, Balthamos or Metatron, are all involved in some meaningful activity – either rebelling, fighting, planning or scheming – and thus engaged in regular interaction with others. Amongst the angels, it is quite clear that younger angels form an in-group that revolves around the values of youth, meaningful

integration in a community, mental or moral stability and integrity, and physical and legal power, whereas the out-group is clearly defined as child and animal like, with no mind of their own, frail, old, declining, in this case typified in the Authority. The view here is a clearly biomedical one, defining age as “primarily understood in its relation to its corporeality [...], as inevitable, manifested in physical decrepitude from which cultural irrelevance could be inferred” (Tulle-Winton 64–65) and connected to a spoiled moral character hiding beneath the exterior, whereas the other ancient beings portray an ageless self, with the body being truly “invisible [instead of] seen as covering the real self (untouched, unchanging, unadulterated and timeless) underneath” (Tulle-Winton 76). As the particles of angels can disintegrate quickly when they are wounded, the notion that “the body offers potential boundaries to the self” (Shilling in Woodward 65) is abandoned as neither Dust nor consciousness know boundaries, thus opening appearance, shape and contents to reconstruction. Yet, the perceived bodies, whether in the eyes of the beholders or truly there, “present both the uniqueness of each individual and a site for marking difference” (Shilling 65). In this binary opposition, the old body is stigmatised and problematic, the signs of age revealing a spoiled personhood (cf. Goffman 4-5) which legitimises the segregation of the individual and similarly adds to the dehumanisation of said individual (cf. Hazan 23) by its separation. Moreover, the description of the Authority echoes age in the way Shakespeare expressed it, as the “Last scene of all,/ That ends this strange eventful history,/ Is second childishness and mere oblivion,/ Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything” (Shakespeare, *As you like it* 154). Not only is the Authority robbed of his own will, but he has regressed to a childlike state, the second childhood which “provides implicit frames of reference for everyday social interaction and encourages infantilisation and practices of infantilisation” (Bond and Cabrero, ‘Health and dependency in later life’ 122). This seeming regression is another aspect of the biomedical discourse as the decline of bodily powers, the loss of bodily control during the fourth age, leads to an increasingly dependent state of the elderly, legitimising ageist or disrespectful practices (cf. Hockey and James 135). In representing the Authority as helpless, dependent and vulnerable, these infantile images and clear images of a second childhood are invoked, resulting in pity on the part of Lyra. Therefore, an even clearer distinction between the Authority and the other angels, underlining his ineptitude and irrelevance even further, is made.

### 3.1.3 Doubling the Form – Humans and Dæmons

Ageing of the human form in *His Dark Materials* presents some compelling departures. In the following, three groups will be looked at. At first, the connection between age and death will be examined in a little more detail, followed by a look at the scholars throughout the series, before ending in an examination of the gyptians, most notably by taking a closer look at Farder Cordam.

The connection between thanatology and gerontology has been seen as an inevitable one, deriving from “the dawning awareness [of] our ancestors that ageing leads to death that magnifies the problem of death” (Greenberg et al. 30) as a permanent and unavoidable constant. Furthermore, the exemption of the aged and their marginalisation to the verges of society has been attributed to the connection of

death with ageing, as the latter is seen as a visible reminder of the former (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 5). Old age, by being a liminal space between life and death, has been seen as a rite of passage before moving on to death (cf. Hazan 81), or a buffer between life and death (ibid.). As people strive for survival, old age is the embodiment “of our vulnerability and inevitable mortality” (Greenberg et al. 34), resulting in “potential for paralyzing terror” which can be softened by “an individualised but culturally derived view of reality that imbues life with order, meaning and permanence, and standards of value that qualify the individual for death transcendence (cultural worldview) [or] one’s value within the context of that worldview (self-esteem)” (ibid.). In this respect, a cultural worldview offers ways by which the individuals existence can be continued beyond their death, for instance by meeting certain standards such as being a good Christian or by taking up specific roles within a society (cf. ibid.) which, in turn, ensure the individual’s value within the societal structure.

Yet, *His Dark Materials* offers a slightly different view that does not restrict age to the old or to infants, but proposes that each individual carries their deaths with them, as one woman finds out after entering the land of the dead:

What we found out when we came here, oh, long ago for most of us, we found we all brought our deaths with us. This is where we found out. We had ‘em all the time, and we never knew. See, everyone has a death. It goes everywhere with ‘em, all their life long, right close by. Our deaths, they’re outside, taking the air; they’ll come in by and by. Granny’s death, he’s there with her, he’s close to her, very close [...] (Pullman, AS 109).

Death is, furthermore, not described as a hovering, cruel figure, or the proverbial Grim Reaper, but as a polite and comforting, if “pale, unremarkable figure in shabby clothes, just drab and quiet and dull” (Pullman, AS 109), who, if the time has come

taps you on the shoulder, or takes your hand, and says, ‘Come along o’ me, it’s time.’ It might happen when you’re sick with a fever, or when you choke on a piece of dry bread, or when you fall off a high building; in the middle of your pain and travail, your death comes to you kindly and says, ‘Easy now, easy, child, you come along o’ me,’ and you go with them in a boat out across the lake into the mist (ibid.).

Yet, the closeness of old age and death is not quite as vigorously abandoned as this relation between death and the living might suggest. The grandmother’s death resides with her underneath her blanket and when Lyra looks at her, she is startled as “the blankets stirred, and a very thin arm emerged, in a black sleeve, and then another face, a man’s, so ancient it was almost a skeleton. In fact, he looked more like the skeleton in the picture than like a living human being” (Pullman, AS 109). The death in question is, just like the grandmother, an ageing figure declining in tandem with her. Assuming that each death, in some form, ages with its human, the relation between life and death is closer still. Moreover, the grandmother’s death describes their relation oddly intimately in comparison to others, like Lyra, who keep their deaths away:

Then came a voice that hadn’t spoken before. From the depths of the bedclothes in the corner came a dry-cracked-nasal tone—not a woman’s voice—not a living voice: it was the voice of the grandmother’s death.  
“[...] You must call up your own deaths. I have heard of people like you, who keep their deaths at bay. You don’t like them, and out of courtesy they stay out of sight. But they’re not

far off. Whenever you turn your head, your deaths dodge behind you. Wherever you look, they hide. They can hide in a teacup. Or in a dewdrop. Or in a breath of wind. Not like me and old Magda here,” he said, and he pinched her withered cheek, and she pushed his hand away. “We live together in kindness and friendship. That’s the answer, that’s it, that’s what you’ve got to do, say welcome, make friends, be kind, invite your deaths to come close to you” (Pullman, AS 110).

He points out that death is always looming ahead and an integral part of the life of people, but that some have managed to push death to the farthest realms of their consciousness, unable to recognise this as a part of their life. His relationship with “old Madga” is somewhat affectionate as he proceeds to pinch her cheek. Death, as such, is not threatening but, echoing the Authority’s death in the previous chapter, a relief, something inevitable but welcome. Old age, still, is the *deja-la*, the ever presence or threshold, of death (cf. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* 15). Even if the close relationship between old age and death, in a double sense as the grandmother’s death is ancient, is reiterated, thus perpetuating the “ageing discourse slid[ing] right into death discourse without critique: age death connection, that virulent stereotype” (Guellette 107), the series also provides a separation between the two as everyone, young, old, animal or human, carries death with them. The only difference, seemingly, is the awareness of doing so as, presumably, older characters are more aware of their mortality than younger people. Furthermore, in making the deaths seem more dull, drab, plain or skeleton like, the series shows death as unmasking what “was never more than a mask, to discover the grin of the skeleton, [...] something that was neither beauty nor truth, but only a plaster and tinsel face” (Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* 15).

Similarly to this slightly different approach to death and old age, one might concur that the attitudes towards old age vary. Looking at the scholars, who are introduced throughout the series, most notably the Master of Jordan college, the alchemist Giacomo Paradisi and the Regius Professor of Cosmology at the University of Gloucester, this presumption is not quite fulfilled. The scholars are united by one factor, apart from their occupation: their age. The scholars of the college are in general described by their age. As Lyra, in the beginning of the series, enters the retiring room, which is reserved exclusively for male scholars (cf. Pullman, NL 1), she observes the paintings on the wall being “[m]ore old Scholars, probably; robed, bearded, and gloomy, they stared out of their frames in solemn disapproval” (Pullman, NL 3). The Master of Jordan college “had been a powerful man, but he was well over seventy now, and his movements were stiff and slow [...] with hooded, clouded eyes” (Pullman, NL 9), Paradisi is “old man with white hair” with broken teeth (Pullman, SK 105) and the Regius Professor is “a gray-bearded man [...] an old man”, mad, suspicious and cranky (Pullman, NL 162, 163, 165). The latter one especially is described in a less than favourable light, both in terms of his body as well as his demeanour, with drops of salvia flying from his mouth when he rants and raves (cf. Pullman, NL 163). Lyra, stating that he is a “mad, [...] poor old man; but he might have some scraps of information that [she] could use” (ibid.), is yet reluctant to go near him (cf. ibid.). Moreover, the scholar is vain and she notes, having spent all her life “dealing with suspicious and cranky Scholars” (ibid.), that flattery and “bland admiration” (ibid.) soothes him and decreases his suspicions far enough to

provide her with the information she needs. Although he is mad, he is still considered a valuable source of knowledge. As such he is not viewed as human but as a means to an end. This dehumanisation is further strengthened by his status as a prisoner in Svalbard, the palace of the panserbjørne, seemingly forgotten under a heap of rags, completely isolated from human or bear contact due to his status as a human and prisoner, and due to his geographical position. Just as the madman had been in the 18th and 19th century, he has experienced utter expulsion from society (cf. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* 9–10).

The scholars of Jordan college are similarly detached, yet their detachment is a different one separating them from reality. In Jordan college, Oxford, which is situated in rural surroundings, colleges and the city around it seem to flow into one, with few scholars leaving the premises but different scholars penetrating the boundaries of the university (cf. Pullman, *NL* 17–18). Yet, the scholars are “unable to see the rich seething stew of alliances and enmities and feuds and treaties which was a child’s life in Oxford [just as Lyra is] unaware of the hidden currents of politics running below the surface of College affairs” (ibid.). Furthermore, their work is described as dry and focussed on things that do not exist. Hidden in a wardrobe while Lord Asriel presents an image of the Aurora, Lyra notes: “There was a stir of excitement among some of the Scholars, as if, having written treatises on the existence of the unicorn without ever having seen one, they’d been presented with a living example newly captured” (Pullman, *NL* 12). This indicates that scholars would research for the sake of research within the confines of the university, without exploring the reality that lies beyond the borders of Oxford. They are, like the Sub-Rector, “nearly blind” (Pullman, *NL* 10). Equally, detachment from one’s surroundings is embodied in the character of Paradisi, a member of the “philosophers’ Guild of the Torre degli Angeli, the Tower of the Angels” (Pullman, *SK* 81) who created the Subtle Knife which is also referred to as *Æsahættr*. These “alchemists, philosophers, men of learning, were making an inquiry into the deepest nature of things. They became curious about the bonds that held the smallest particles of matter together” (Pullman, *SK* 113). In this endeavour, they discovered different worlds which are opened by the Subtle Knife by cutting windows in the veil that separates the worlds. These men could “pass into other worlds and steal from them and bring back what they find. Gold and jewels, of course, but other things too, like ideas, or sacks of corn, or pencils. They are the source of all [that] wealth [...] that Guild of thieves” (Pullman, *SK* 82). However, as they became more and more focussed on their creations and possibilities, forgetting their responsibility to their fellow citizens, they forgot to close the windows into other worlds, thus letting spectres, malevolent creatures feeding on Dust, into their world which lead to its decay (Pullman, *SK* 113, 81–82). Paradisi, after noticing these problems, hides away in the tower where he remains protected by the knife, thus separating himself consciously from any form of social contact as adults are unable to enter the city. He, similarly to the Regis Professor, experiences the ultimate separation from society due to circumstances of his own making as well as by his position in the highest tower of the city. Yet, he provides Will and Lyra with the knowledge of the knife and how to use it before he, presumably, ends his life (cf. Pullman, *SK* 113). Moreover, and apart from their age, another uniting factor of the scholars is their anxiety, their anxiety of their

research being taken over and away (cf. Pullman, NL 162), of dying and being unable to pass on their knowledge (cf. Pullman, SK 82) or of being unable to protect their charges properly (cf. Pullman, NL 17). This anxiety belies their apparent detachment and leads to the Librarian's observation that it is "[...] the duty of the old, [...] to be anxious on behalf of the young. And the duty of the young is to scorn the anxiety of the old" (Pullman, NL 17).

There are a few features that unite these men. First of all, all of them are older men of learning who are often described as "thin, gangly, physically unattractive, sexually unappealing, and often poorly or oddly dressed" (Deats and Lenker 162) and often exposed to ridicule or scorn by Lyra and others. Their exterior, which is described by stigmata of age and sickness, such as blindness, white hair, lined faces or senility, hints at a faulty or tainted personhood underneath (cf. Goffman 4), as blindness is understood literally and metaphorically, whereas white hair and wrinkles are an indicator of antiquated views. Thus, age, in case of the scholars, rests on a biomedical approach, centring on a problematic old body as well as on the connection of knowledge and age. Secondly, they all seem to be intensely focussed on their research matter and are often socially incompetent. They are bordering on being regarded "as a caricature, the idealistic, dreaming scholar becom[ing] a buffoon, like Thales falling into the well; impractical, ineffectual and embittered" (Deats and Lenker 168), while simultaneously their "life experience is conceived of as a resource, the value of which increases in the direct proportion to age and which may only be undermined by the onset of 'senility'" (Hazan 61) or, in the case of the Regius Professor, madness. In their otherworldliness, age and detachment they are directly contrasted with the explorers of the series, such as Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter, who are, in Lyra's eyes, fascinating characters, actively seeking new lands, pursuing matter much more dazzling and real than those of the scholars, which, moreover, highlights the scholars' confinement and relative passivity. The restriction and confinement of the scholars is not only expressed in mental terms, as the madness and departure of reason of the Regius Professor shows, but also in spatial terms, as they exist only within the surroundings of their universities or institutions of learning and are rarely found outside, be it the colleges of Oxford or the Torre degli Angeli which Paradisi cannot leave, first because he is a prisoner and later because he might be attacked by spectres. Even though the connotation of wisdom and age is neither new nor exclusively negative, within *His Dark Materials* 'proper' scholars, with their loss of vision, are not necessarily the authentic scholars, who are

individualistic, idealistic, and a seeker of truth, pursuing abstract, often absolute principles in matters of infinite complexity. Accomplishment in the material world, even the scholarly world, is marked by the ability to negotiate, to simplify, and to focus on a concrete plan of action in order to succeed (Deats and Lenker 167).

Thus, gaining true wisdom is not necessarily embodied by the scholars. Still, old age is tightly connected with notions of knowledge and detachment as most scholars are nearly exclusively described as such. For example, Paradisi is either denominated by his age, as an old man<sup>15</sup>, or simply by his last name.

<sup>15</sup> Within the few pages of the *Subtle Knife* in which he is named, he is described as "an old man" eleven times (cf. Pullman 110, 111, 112, 113).

The Regius Professor adds the notion of senility or madness to the matter of age, thus, combining madness or the absence of reason held by others with old age, leading to a harsher exemption of the old mad to the remotest parts of the world. Thus, the “modern man no longer communicates with the [old] madman” (Foucault, *Madness* ix) because of the man’s disease as well as due to his spatial separation. Old age, as typified in the scholars, is described as acquiring knowledge but not wisdom, being confined instead of being a visionary, being passive instead of active, having lost the connection to the world in mental and spatial terms and being, therefore, disengaged from society. The further the disengagement and separation goes, the less human and fully rounded the scholars appear to be.

When it comes to true wisdom and the powerful position of old age, in contrast to the scholars who might be scorned and ridiculed but do possess a certain kind of social prestige but hardly any power within society or over Lyra, the Gyptians, a nomadic people travelling on canal boats in large family units, are more compelling to look at. At first perceived as enemies by Lyra, she soon learns that as a child she had been cared for by them (cf. Pullman, NL 65), thus, starting to rely on them again in her plight. As she is taken to the king of the Gyptians, John Faa, she is privy to his power:

At the front of the Zaal there was a platform with eight carved wooden chairs set out. [...] eight men appeared from the shadows at the rear of the platform and stood in front of the chairs. A ripple of excitement swept over the audience as they hushed one another and shoved themselves into spaces on the nearest bench. Finally there was silence and seven of the men on the platform sat down. [...] The one who remained was in his seventies, but tall and bull necked and powerful. He wore a plain canvas jacket and a checked shirt, like many gyptian men; there was nothing to mark him out but the air of strength and authority he had. Lyra recognized it: Uncle Asriel had it, and so did the Master of Jordan. This man’s dæmon was a crow, very like the Master’s raven (Pullman, NL 58).

From this point onwards her respect for him is based on his seeming similarities with Lord Asriel, and sometimes the Master of Jordan, his social power and his sheer physicality as he is “stern and massive and expressionless, more like a pillar of rock than a man [...] his voice rumbling like the earth itself” (Pullman, NL 58–59), yet warm and gentle. He is described in stark contrast to the Master of Jordan college, who, although the same age, is marked as old more clearly and more visibly, for instance by moving slower. John Faa however has retained his power in social and physical terms, even if he is described as an old man multiple times (cf. Pullman, NL 60, 61, 92).

The description of Farder Coram, a former explorer, is much different. Coram is by far the oldest of the Gyptians, possessing a skull-like face, walking with a stick, continuously trembling as if with an ague and having a smile, a “hesitant, rich, complicated expression that trembled across his face like sunlight chasing shadows on a windy March day” (Pullman, NL 59–60). He is referred to as “a wise man. He’s a seer” (ibid. 61) and highly respected for his wisdom, knowledge and advice. Moreover, he is the second in command to John Faa and appears to be the only one calling Faa exclusively by his first name, which indicates a high social rank amongst the Gyptians. Similar to Sattamax, the zalif described in the chapter on non-human beings, Coram’s physical age is thrown in contrast both by his voice and by his dæmon which seems to be a reflection of Coram’s voice. His dæmon, “was a beautiful autumn-colored cat, massive in size, who stalked along the table with upraised tail and elegantly

inspected Pantalaimon” (Pullman, NL 60) while his voice is “rich and musical, with as many tones in it as there were colours in his dæmon’s fur” (Pullman, NL 61). Sophonax, Coram’s dæmon, is furthermore

the most beautiful dæmon she’d ever seen. When Pantalaimon was a cat, he was lean and ragged and harsh, but Sophonax, for that was her name, was golden-eyed and elegant beyond measure, fully twice as large as a real cat and richly furred. When the sunlight touched her, it lit up more shades of tawny-brown-leaf-hazel-corn-gold-autumn-mahogany than Lyra could name. She longed to touch that fur, to rub her cheeks against it, but of course she never did; for it was the grossest breach of etiquette imaginable to touch another person’s dæmon (Pullman, NL 72).

In observing the man’s dæmon, Lyra notices that she, Sophonax, is the direct contrast to Coram as she is “as sleek and healthy and beautiful as Farder Coram was ravaged and weak. He might have been ill, or he might have suffered a crippling blow, but the result was that he could not walk without leaning on two sticks” (Pullman, NL 72). Like his dæmon’s healthy exterior, his “mind was sharp and clear and powerful, though” (ibid.) and uninhibited by his physical stigmata. The more Lyra is exposed to his presence and the more she learns from and about him, for instance that he is one of three people able to read the alethiometer<sup>16</sup> (Pullman, NL 66), that he is brave and courageous (Pullman, NL 90), and a strategic and cunning diplomat (Pullman, NL 85–86), the more she longs for his approval and seeks his advice and the less he is described as an old man but designated as Farder Coram, culminating in her exclamation that she loves him and Iorek more than her own father (Pullman, NL 183).

Ageing is, within the Gyptian society, not necessarily negative, although, apart from John Faa and Farder Coram no other older characters are named or described. John Faa, being seventy years old, is still a fierce king and an imposing figure, who even if he is called an old man, has no other stigmata of age such as wrinkles, frailty, loss of physical or mental capabilities attached to him. Farder Coram however is clearly described in predominantly physical terms, showing multiple stigmata of age such as loss of mobility, wrinkles, frailty and, even more so, a connection to illness, going as far as terming him as crippled. Thus, Farder Coram, more so than Faa, is depicted within the confines of the biomedical discourse of ageing, which problematises the old body and proposes a mind and body dualism as Coram’s inner self remains spiritually what he has lost physically. His dæmon, the mirror of his soul, is youthful, strong, healthy, mobile, richly coloured and elegant, representing Coram’s mind as agile and, as his dæmon is comparatively big, broadened. In contrast to the scholars, he possesses wisdom, that is build on his experiences and which exceeds the simple acquisition of knowledge. Coram’s body seems to possess what Hepworth and Featherstone describe as a “tension between fixed body [and] the inner, young or real self [in which the] older body is a cage from which the young self cannot escape” (Hepworth and Featherstone in Estes et al. 38), a cage that masks the youthful self within. Yet, this tension is lessened by the physical expression of this inner self in form of his dæmon. Although he possesses a highly stigmatised body, his personhood is neither faulty nor spoiled (cf. Goffman, *Stigma* 4–5). Moreover, neither his age nor the stigmata of his broken body separate him

<sup>16</sup> An alethiometer is „something like a large watch or a small clock: a thick disk of gold and crystal“ (Pullman, NL 38) also referred to as a truth reader (ibid.). Such a device is given to Lyra, who is able to read it later on, by the Master of Jordan in *Northern Lights*.

from his community, even though he additionally bears another marker of perceived ineptitude, the marker of illness. Quite on the contrary. Not only is he part of the ruling group within the society of the Gyptians, but he is also more than a counsellor as he is tightly involved in the preparations of the expedition to the north (cf. Pullman, *NL* 72). The respect of his fellow Gyptians also stems partly from his deeds as a younger man, partly from his abilities as a diplomat, and partly from his patience and wisdom, all of which assure him his place and authority within the community. As separation of older members from society prevents “them from being a functioning part of society [and] may propagate the belief that the elderly have entered a stage of life where they are now useless and obsolete” his growing old is not associated with growing obsolete but “as gradually taking on new and important roles. To the extent that elderly persons are viewed as an ongoing part of the social network, they are not as potent a reminder that death is around the corner” (Greenberg et al. 42). He is, overall, still a member of the in-group which is largely heterogeneous. Moreover, him being an old man seems to fade into the background the longer Lyra is exposed to his presence, thus foregrounding the notion that “[i]nterdependence across age groups can therefore undercut mutual stereotypes” (Fiske and Cuddy 16) by being exposed to stereotype-incongruent information, in this case in form of a healthy dæmon in stark contrast with his human counterpart.

### 3.2. ...in *Harry Potter*

Similarly to Philip Pullman's series *His Dark Materials*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has received wide, international acclaim in popular culture and academia (cf. Cantrell 4). It spans seven books and has produced multiple complementary works adding more details to the canon. Yet, the reader observes Harry, the black haired, green eyed, scrawny wizard with the lighting-bolt scar on his forehead (cf. Rowling, *Philosophers Stone* 27) at first in the normal, non-magical world, which is "reflected through the microcosm of the Dursley household, [which] is aware of the magic but chooses to disregard or shun it" (Gupta, *Re-Reading Harry Potter* 86). In order to enter the magical world he is initiated by Hagrid, who takes him through a portal, the Leaky Cauldron, "a tiny, grubby-looking pub" (Rowling, *Stone* 52) invisible to the eyes of non-magical people, as well as the wall that guards the entrance to Diagon Alley which has to be tapped in a specific order (cf. *ibid.* 53). Thus, both worlds are clearly separated from each other with the fantastic, namely magic, rarely crossing over. The series is, just as *His Dark Materials*, a portal fantasy featuring a secondary world with its own rules and inner consistency as well as possessing some of the common "elements as the hero, the quest, the series of trials, and the polarisation of good and evil" (Thompson 37). Yet, it also shows features of an intrusion of the non-magical world by the magical world, as there are Squibs, "someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn't got any magic powers" (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 162) who are often exiled to the non-magical world (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 78) but retain their knowledge of the magical world, there are the letters sent by owls who find their recipients in the Muggle world, and moreover, during the latter books in the series, it is the Dementors which attack Harry and his cousin Dudley and later on breed causing a thick mist over the country (cf. Rowling, *Order of Phoenix* 25, *Halfblood Prince* 9). Thus, the lines separating the two worlds, although they do not disintegrate, blur as the series progresses, allowing for more and more intrusions of the magical elements into the non-magical world. Furthermore, it is also a scripted series which revolves around a stable set of characters trying to answer questions such as: "How will the heroes and their society survive? Will the quest be achieved or the antagonist defeated? Will the hero fulfil her potential?" (Maund 148-149) and involving

young protagonists, sometimes troubled, who have an important mission that may be addressed through a crucial otherworldly adventure, an excursion into an invented world that may have well defined boundaries (possibly mappable) or more abstract configurations, adult and other guides who offer information and assistance to major characters, perilous journeys that provoke mind and life altering events and consequences [and] a return to the primary world [...] (Smith, 'Tradition, Transformation and the bold Emergence' 136).

The series, in terms of its topics, follows an Arthurian tradition (cf. Morris, 'Elements of the Arthurian Tradition in *Harry Potter*', sec. 1) of a modest hero whose life and path are predestined by a prophecy and whose upbringing is humble. By the help of wise mentors, a court of friends and followers and because his "untarnished and whole" soul has the "incomparable power" to vanquish Voldemort (Rowling, *Prince* 478) he is, in the end, able to defeat the evil Dark Lord by sacrificing himself, returning from a limbo-like place (cf. Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 706) and engaging his adversary in single

combat. Yet, the series covers more topics than immortality, morality or the juxtaposition of good and evil. The series also replicates and sometimes highlights questions of power, poverty, visibility and invisibility, class, terror and family conflicts, racism and bigotry, expressed in the conflict within the hierarchically structured society between so-called purebloods, Muggleborns and halfbloods as well as in the relationship between wizards and creatures such as houseelves and centaurs. The world that is provided, although often ambiguous, is, apart from the introduction of magic and fantastic beasts, not very different from the mundane world, with its various centres of power, its conflicts and characters. It is, according to Sterling-Folker and Folker, a nation-state in which the law of blood is very much foregrounded (cf. Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* 35-38) and have “developed state structures that are similar to our own and participate in rudimentary international institutions and cooperative activities” (Sterling-Folker and Folker in Nexon 103). Moreover, instead of the steampunk inspired world of *His Dark Materials*, *Harry Potter* is a mixture of non-magical items turned magical, such as the Wizarding Wireless, water pipes, faucets, the Hogwarts Express, cars and motorbikes and a Victorian inspired society in which individuals use quills and parchment, dress in robes and use candles instead of electricity. Its main institutions are the Ministry of Magic, Hogwarts, the St. Mungos Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries and Gringotts Bank, covering the fields of administration, bureaucracy and law enforcement, education, medicine and economy respectively and working similarly to those in the mundane world.

When it comes to the perception of the life course within the series, a problem already mentioned in connection to *His Dark Materials* occurs, as the books are told from the point of view of Harry Potter and are, thus, affected by a gaze of youth probably favouring youth, adolescence and adulthood over old age. The in-group of the series is young, active, magical and morally good, best typified in the *Order of the Phoenix* and the students allied with Harry. Yet, adulthood and middle age are not always displayed favourably as most of the ministry workers are described as largely incompetent, narrow-minded and intolerant (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 61, 87-89, 127, 552; *Order* 29, 71, 128, 845), whereas the Order’s members are secretive, passive, and tend to exclude the children from plans they are involved in (cf. *Order* 90-94, 80-84). It is only in the latter’s case that this view changes over the course of the last three novels, as Harry and his friends are more and more included in the Order and often function as centrepieces of plans. Yet, the series, instead of only focussing solely on adult or young characters, features elderly characters rather prominently. The life course, in this case, is slightly different from the life course of the mundane world. Whereas the life expectancy in the mundane world ranges up to 80 to 85 years, the life expectancy of wizards and witches extends up to 137 3/4 years of age by the 1990s as they “have the power to correct or override ‘mundane’ nature, but not ‘magical’ nature” (Rowling, *Pottermore* sec. ‘Illness’) and are thus able to escape most of the physical afflictions which might curb the life span. However, there are other wizards that can overextend this number, for instance as Nicolas Flamel, with the help of the philosopher’s stone reached the age of 665 (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 176), and the Trolley Lady, in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, claims to have been hired as an employee in 1830 thus being approximately 185 years old (cf. Rowling 47). In tandem with this extended longevity,

wizardkind ages slower, yet, middle age and old age seem to be marked by a similar chronological age, even if an age of retirement as the presumed start of old age is not given explicitly. Alastor Moody, referred to as an old Auror with a “mane of dark gray hair” (Rowling, *Goblet of Fire* 185) and an old friend of Dumbledore’s, “retired from the Ministry when no longer able to tell the difference between a handshake and attempted murder” (Rowling, *Goblet* 203) at an unknown age. Professor Kettleburn retires “in order to enjoy more time with his remaining limbs” (Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban* 93) at an unknown age, and Horace Slughorn, a “fat, bald, old man [...] [with a] shiny pate, [...] prominent eyes, [and an] enormous, silver, walruslike mustache” (Rowling, *Prince* 42–43), retired in 1981 from his teaching post (cf. Rowling, *Short Stories from Hogwarts of Power, Politics and Pesky Poltergeists* ch. 5) at the age of roughly 100 (if he was born in 1882) or 67 (if he was born in 1914, the latest birth year, as he started teaching in 1931 (cf. Rowling, *Short Stories* ch. 3) and taught for half a century (cf. *ibid*)). Other retirees are not mentioned explicitly but it is hinted that elder characters seem to be involved in meaningful activities in the family unit or in the Order of the Phoenix. During the course of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* it is, moreover, mentioned that a retirement home for the elderly exists. The St. Oswald’s Home for Old Witches and Wizards is very much different from the notion of retirement homes “as a tragedy of enforced idleness and ‘roleless’ existence” (Gilleard and Higgs 137), as it is

chaos. [It] is magic. [I]t is as wonderful as you might hope. Walker frames are conjured into life, knitting wool is enchanted into chaos, and male nurses are made to dance tango. These are people relieved of the burden of having to do magic for a reason — instead these witches and wizards do magic for fun. And what fun they have (Rowling, *Child* 66).

Whereas most aged characters might still be working in some form or other, there is also an institution to retire for those too old or too ill. Yet, it does not explain how the wizarding society’s attitudes towards older characters are constituted.

In the following, a few older characters will be looked at in an exemplary fashion. As the series provides a great number of them, implicitly and explicitly, only some can be analysed. Furthermore, as, in comparison to *His Dark Materials*, there is an absence of humanoid or non-human creatures, a different grouping of characters is needed as they cannot be separated by species or their similarity to humans as there is no explicit description of centaurs, giant, vampires, goblins or merpeople or their societies. Similarly, the houseelves are not fleshed out enough to be suitable for further analysis. At first the chapter’s focus will shift to those who trespass the clear demarcation between the magical and the mundane world, the squibs, who are non-magical but knowledgeable of the wizarding world and who are ostracised for their lack of magic. Secondly, it will move on to Ollivander who is one of the gatekeepers between the magical and the non-magical world. The third focus will then rest on employees of the Ministry of Magic, most notable the governors of the Wizarding Examinations Authority, Rufus Scrimgeour, former Auror and Minister of Magic, and Elphias Doge, an advisor to the Wizengamot. The last part of the chapter will examine the scholars of the series, both within Hogwarts and outside. The group of Death Eaters will be largely left unexplored as older characters are only implied but not explicitly named and even less described. Yet, as none of these subchapters touches

upon one of the most notable major characters, Albus Dumbledore, another chapter will take a closer look at the old age of Dumbledore as well as Tom Riddle, who, having being born in 1926<sup>17</sup> and therefore being 71 to 72 years old, can be considered an older character as well.

### 3.2.1 Neither Wizard nor Muggle

A squib as such is “someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn’t got any magic powers. Kind of the opposite of Muggle-born wizards, but Squibs are quite unusual” (Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets* 145). They are people who are more importantly not highly regarded, which becomes clear as Ron notes in *Philosophers Stone* that his mother’s second cousin is a Squib living in the Muggle world but they “never talk about him” (78). Furthermore, Squibs seem to be viewed with derision in the wizarding society (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 141, 270; *Chamber* 142, 145, 185; *Order* 143), with the attribution of this term seen as an insult (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 185). All through the series, only three squibs are explicitly mentioned, and of those only two by name, who are, furthermore, directly involved with one or more of the recurring characters. One of these characters is Arabella Figg, a neighbour of the Dursley’s, who is described, by Harry, as “a mad old lady who lived two streets away. Harry hated it there. The whole house smelled of cabbage [...]” (Rowling, *Stone* 16). She is also sometimes seen “frowning and muttering to herself” (Rowling, *Order* 2). Even her style of dress is depicted as peculiar as she has taken to wearing a hairnet over her grizzled grey hair and tartan carpet slippers, with a clanking string shopping bag hanging from her wrist (cf. Rowling, *Order* 2, 19). Her voice is quavery and her cheeks are said to be withered (cf. Rowling, *Order* 143, 144). Harry, every time the Dursleys leave to celebrate his cousin’s birthday, is left at Mrs. Figg’s and forced to “look at photographs of all the cats she’d ever owned” (ibid.). He notes later on that after she broke her leg by tripping over one of her cats, the time spent there “wasn’t as bad as usual [...] [as] she didn’t seem quite as fond of [her cats] as before. She let Harry watch television and gave him a bit of chocolate cake that tasted as though she’d had it for several years” (Rowling, *Stone* 23 - 24). It is not until *The Order of the Phoenix* that Harry learns not only that Mrs. Figg has kept an eye on him on Albus Dumbledore’s orders but also that she is not a Muggle but a squib. It is at that point, when his perception of her starts to change slightly as she behaves very differently from what he is used to:

Harry made to stow his wand hurriedly out of sight, but —  
 “Don’t put it away, idiot boy!” she shrieked. “What if there are more of them around? Oh, I’m going to kill Mundungus Fletcher!”  
 [...]
   
 The revelation that his batty old cat-obsessed neighbour knew what dementors were was almost as big a shock to Harry as meeting two of them down the alleyway. “You’re — you’re a witch?”  
 “I’m a Squib, as Mundungus knows full well, so how on earth was I supposed to help you fight off dementors? He left you completely without cover when I *warned* him —” (Rowling, *Order* 19-20, emphasis in original).

<sup>17</sup> The events in *The Chamber of Secrets* take place in 1992-93. Fifty years earlier, as noted in the diary, point to the school year of 1942-43. In this year, Hagrid was a third year, and Riddle was two years above him in fifth year. Subtracting fifteen years leads to the year 1927, however, as Riddle was born on New Year’s his birth year in 1926 (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 246-248)

Instead of the feeble, ambling old woman Harry perceived before, she displays an intricate knowledge of the wizarding world and the Order of the Phoenix of which she is a member, knowing the times when members are around to observe and protect Harry (cf. Rowling, *Order* 22). Upon meeting the Order member assigned to protect Harry, Mundungus Fletcher, the image of an old woman is further abandoned as she does not only admonish him for sneaking “off buying stolen cauldrons” but she furthermore physically attacks him by

[raising] the arm from which her string bag dangled and whack[ing] Mundungus around the face and neck with it; judging by the clanking noise it made it was full of cat food.  
 “Ouch — gerroff — gerroff, you mad old bat! Someone’s gotta tell Dumbledore!”  
 “Yes — they — have!” yelled Mrs. Figg, still swinging the bag of cat food at every bit of Mundungus she could reach. (Rowling, *Order* 23).

While in this exchange she paints the picture of a clever, sarcastic woman with a temper, the stigmatised position of her being a Squib is underlined during Harry’s disciplinary hearing, during which “[s]he looked scared and more batty than ever” (Rowling, *Order* 143) not even having changed out of her carpet slippers (ibid.). Furthermore, she is frowned upon and later on, even if her account is truthful, dismissed by Fudge as being not a very convincing witness (cf. Rowling, *Order* 145).

The connection between a lack of magic, old age and cats, however, is not only exemplified in Arabella Figg but also in Argus Filch, the caretaker of Hogwarts. Filch is not a pleasant character (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 105), universally hated by the student body (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 106) as well as the teachers later on (cf. Rowling, *Order* 676–677), and best viewed at a distance (cf. Rowling, *Order* 628). He is described as aged (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 601), having “purple patches on his sunken, veined cheeks, his jowls were aquiver and his thin gray hair dishevelled” (Rowling, *Order* 284), with knobbly hands and pouchy face (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 143, 159), a hunchback (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 269) and being rheumatic (cf. Rowling, *Order* 629). Moreover, McGonagall refers to him as “blithering idiot” and “fool”, who has “been complaining about [Peeves] for a quarter of a century” (Rowling, *Hallows* 602). Filch also owns a cat

called Mrs. Norris, a scrawny, dust-colored creature with bulging, lamp like eyes just like Filch’s. She patrolled the corridors alone. Break a rule in front of her, put just one toe out of line, and she’d whisk off for Filch, who’d appear, wheezing, two seconds later. Filch knew the secret passageways of the school better than anyone (except perhaps the Weasley twins) and could pop up as suddenly as any of the ghosts (Rowling, *Stone* 106).

Similar to Mrs. Figg, who is very proud of her cats showing them off and using them for errands, Mrs. Norris is used for patrolling the floors and is held in high esteem by Filch, which is most clearly seen during *Chamber of Secrets* in which Mrs. Norris is petrified in the literal sense of the word. Upon finding her he

fell back, clutching his face in horror. “My cat! My cat! What’s happened to Mrs. Norris?” he shrieked. [...] Lockhart’s comments were punctuated by Filch’s dry, racking sobs. He was slumped in a chair by the desk, unable to look at Mrs. Norris, his face in his hands. Much as he detested Filch, Harry couldn’t help feeling a bit sorry for him [...] (Rowling, *Chamber* 140–142).

When it comes to students, Argus Filch, “who hangs on the last vestige of authority that his title gives him” (Sibley 64), is less inclined to treat them with a speck of kindness, instead revelling in their punishments which he wishes were far harder:

I bet you'll think twice about breaking a school rule again, won't you, eh?" he said, leering at them. "Oh yes... hard work and pain are the best teachers if you ask me.... It's just a pity they let the old punishments die out... hang you by your wrists from the ceiling for a few days, I've got the chains still in my office, keep 'em well oiled in case they're ever needed.... Right, off we go, and don't think of running off, now, it'll be worse for you if you do" (Rowling, *Stone* 198).

Thus, he treats Dolores Umbridge, Ministry employee and High Inquisitor of Hogwarts, who is very much in favour of punishing students more severely, with utmost respect and is seen chanting “Approval for Whipping...Approval for...I can do it at last...they've had it coming to them for years...”, after Educational Decree Twenty-nine, which he kisses, is issued by Umbridge (cf. Rowling, *Order* 673).

By having “dung for brains” and being very suspicious (cf. Rowling, *Order* 451), nasty and at times downright cruel he is in stark contrast to Arabella Figg who, although ‘batty’, is kind and clever. Both are, however, described as visibly aged characters with less than desirable physical and personality traits. Filch is depicted in a physically unpleasant way, his body stigmatised by hunched shoulders, bad posture and stringy grey hair, while Figg is described as having withered cheeks and grey, flyaway hair. Both, thus, bear visible markers of difference and of old age, even if their respective ages are never explicitly stated. Filch's undesirable exterior seeks to “expose something unusual and bad about the moral character to the signifier” (Goffman, *Stigma* 1), signifying an equally undesirable character which is “most effectively embodied by old age” (Featherstone and Hepworth in Tulle-Winton 69). Moreover, his physical appearance and age is directly linked with an illness, rheumatism, which has led to his hunched shoulders. Thus, Filch is most notably described within the confines of a biomedical discourse linking unpleasant character traits, illness and old age with another and showing a stark physical as well as moral decline. Mrs. Figg, in comparison, is linked with the, later debunked, notion of battiness and madness, to which her sense of dress seemingly confers. This connection hints at a loss of self-control and decline as Julia Twigg notes:

In general, being correctly dressed is an element of engaging successfully with the social world [...] lapses of dress [...] do not just offend against the performance norms of the social space but signal a social and moral decline that may threaten a person's capacity to remain part of mainstream society (Twigg in Küpper 134).

As Mrs. Figg seems to disregard these “performance norms of the social space” by wearing slippers and a hairnet, both elements of the private sphere, within the social space, she is marginalised in the Muggle world (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 16) and, adding to this position, she is even more so pushed to a liminal position within the magical society because of her affiliation with the social stigma of being a Squib, resulting in “hostile and discriminatory behaviour toward members of [this] group on account of their membership in that group” (Zebrowitz in Braithwaite 315). In both, Filch's and Figg's case, more than one stigma is at work. Both are very much marginalised, Figg by living amongst Muggles and

being sneered at by Muggles as well as by magical people, and Filch by living in Hogwarts, thus seeing what he cannot have on a daily basis and being clearly separated by his rank, as he is the only human servant in the castle, and by his lack of magic, as the only Squib in the castle, and age. Even though he is gainfully employed, his work is, as described, somewhat meaningless as he is mostly seen doing menial work and cleaning the school, which is a vast amount of space to be covered, far too much for one person. The only meaningful work he does is his part within the surveillance network that is Hogwarts, a role to which he clings. This is in direct contrast to Mrs. Figg whose occupation as the quiet observer and babysitter of Harry under Dumbledore's orders is meaningful in the sense that she can report and, if necessary, protect Harry. Yet, to put both characters in a more critical perspective, it cannot be fully determined whether their marginalisation, bitterness and peculiar behaviours are due to the stigma of lacking magic, as the in-group is not only younger but possesses magic, or due to the stigma of old age, as both characters are not illuminated enough within their social surroundings to allow for a definite statement. Still, it is possible that both stigmata mutually enforce each other.

### 3.2.2 The Gatekeeper

Mr. Ollivander is, after Florean Fortescue and Tom, the barkeeper of the Leaky Cauldron, the most notable shop keeper in Diagon Alley. He is "an old wizard" (Rowling, *Goblet* 308) with long skeleton like fingers (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 308; *Hallows* 491) whose "wide, pale eyes [shone] like moons through the gloom of the shop" (Rowling, *Stone* 64) and are by Harry considered a bit creepy as he does not blink (cf. *ibid.*). The wandmaker, who was born before or in the year of 1907<sup>18</sup>, is later imprisoned by Lord Voldemort who seeks the knowledge of wand cores as well as knowledge of the famous Elder Wand which makes its wielder invincible (cf. Rowling, *Tales of Beedle the Bard* 89). Harry sees him in a vision, noting an "old man lying in rags upon a stone floor, screaming, a horrible, drawn-out scream, a scream of unendurable agony..." (Rowling, *Hallows* 84) and finds him later, after freeing him from Malfoy Manor, transformed into a frail person:

The wandmaker was lying on the twin bed farthest from the window. He had been held in the cellar for more than a year, and tortured, Harry knew, on at least one occasion. He was emaciated, the bones of his face sticking out sharply against the yellowish skin. His great silver eyes seemed vast in their sunken sockets. The hands that lay upon the blanket could have belonged to a skeleton (Rowling, *Hallows* 491).

His voice, which had been soft before (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 64), is turned feeble and weak (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 491). Yet, most of his character traits remain the same. Ollivander is, although he opposes Voldemort to a certain degree, not allied with any side in the conflict between good and evil that evolves around him. He is fascinated by wandlore, seemingly becoming more and more enthusiastic the longer a wand takes to choose a wizard (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 66), a fascination which eclipses moral dimensions as he states that "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named did great things – terrible, yes, but great"

<sup>18</sup> Garrick Ollivander was a known wandmaker by 1926 as seen on MACUSA's Wand Permit Application (cf. Salisbury, *The Case of Beasts: Explore the Film Wizardry of Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* sec. 'Wand Permit Application'). In order to be of age by this time he would have to be born in 1907 at the latest.

(Rowling, *Stone* 67), an appreciation he echoes scant hours after having been rescued from the Dark Lords clutches: “‘The owner of the Elder Wand must always fear attack,’ said Ollivander, ‘but the idea of the Dark Lord in possession of the Deathstick is, I must admit ... formidable’” (Rowling, *Hallows* 496). His occupation, thus, overlays moral distinctions as he values the magical feat itself and not the intentions behind it. Apart from the visible markers of age given above, Ollivander shows no other stigmata of ageing, as he remains flexible, flittering around his shop (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 66), intelligent, enthusiastic and, moreover, retains a large memory, remembering every wand he has ever sold (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 67). Furthermore, his family line has been selling wands since 382 BC (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 64). He has learned his craft from an early age on, showing precious talent, improving it along the way, leading to his status as “arguably the finest maker of wands in the world” (Rowling, *Pottermore* sec. ‘Ollivander’).

Yet, Ollivander, in his position as a wandmaker, possesses another function than being a shopkeeper. He is a gatekeeper, as he supplies a wand the most important tool for a wizard, an object through which a witch or wizard is able to channel his or her magic, to each and every wizard in Britain. Even if wandless magic is possible, it is very difficult to achieve, which means that a wizard without a wand, as shown multiple times within the series, is utterly defenceless (cf. Rowling, *Order* 749, 758; *Hallows* 453, 470; *Prince* 390, 398; *Chamber* 301). Thus, by supplying generations of wizards with the one tool which turns them into a true wizard, Ollivander is also a gatekeeper. The archetype of the gatekeeper or guardian describes a

character who most often guards the passage from the hero’s ordinary world and his new world of adventure. The Guardian’s main mission is to test or teach your hero and to ensure the protagonist proves himself worthy of his goal. This means, he is there to show the hero his weaknesses, help him overcome them, and to make sure things aren’t too easy for your hero (Schulze, ‘Threshold Guardian or Gatekeeper’ par. 1).

Thus, it is Ollivander in providing Harry with multiple wands, one of which Harry needs to be worthy of in order to become a wizard, and by telling him that the phoenix feather in Harry’s wand is the same as in Voldemort’s wand, which will later prove to be important, as both wands cannot defeat each other in single combat (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 663), who is also simultaneously showing Harry his weakness. This weakness, although Harry does not know it at first, is the connection between him and Voldemort which will lead to both, despair and the defeat of Voldemort. In selling the wand to Harry, he, unknowingly, exacerbates Harry’s triumph over evil by pointing out his implicit strength, which lies in Harry’s wholeness and kindness, as the flip side of Voldemort (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 478, Schulze par. 2). Moreover, Ollivander proves to be a threshold guardian twice in the story. At first, as just described, he provides the needed tool for being or becoming a wizard, but later, during the events of *The Deathly Hallows*, he provides Harry with enough knowledge of wandlore as well as the Elder Wand to be able figure out that the latter will not work for the Dark Lord but for Harry himself. Thus, by equipping Harry first with his wand, properly initiating him in the wizarding world, and by presenting him later on with another more powerful wand, which similarly shows Harry his strengths and weaknesses, Ollivander amounts twice in the series to a gatekeeper. Usually, however, the archetype conforms to

“an evil doer or villain’s henchman” (Schulze par. 5), an animal or a hybrid. In this case, the gatekeeper is an old man, intelligent, and equipped with a vast memory, a cultural memory essentially, which he stores, teaches to a certain extent, transmits with the help of stories and cultivates as a specialist (cf. Assmann 111). His status among the wizards is, thus, a highly respected one as he is not only a source of specialised knowledge, but also the only one possessing it as the making of wands is a jealously guarded secret (cf. Rowling, *Pottermore* sec. ‘Ollivander’). Even though he is described as old, this attribution only happens after Harry has seen him sick and tortured, underlining the notion that “you’re not old unless you’re old and sick” (Guellette 81), and foregrounding the close connection between age and sickness (cf. Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 14). Yet, it is his age, in this respect, which enables him to reach a higher status, as the knowledge of wandlore is to be gained after years, thus, old age in this case signifies not decline but a progress, an unusual narrative in old age (cf. Guellette 9, 22).

### 3.2.3 The Ministry

The Ministry of Magic is the political entity within the series and the governing body of the Wizarding World. One of its main functions, at first, seems to be the concealment of the Wizarding World from the mundane world by enforcing what is called the International Code of Secrecy which states that

[e]ach wizarding governing body will be responsible for the concealment, care, and control of all magical beasts, beings, and spirits dwelling within its territory’s borders. Should any such creature cause harm to, or draw the notice of, the Muggle community, that nation’s wizarding governing body will be subject to discipline by the International Confederation of Wizards (Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts and where to find them* xvi).

Yet, the statute can be disregarded in times of crisis when a threat to the Wizarding World is “likely to affect the Muggles” (Rowling, *Prince* 3) or when a new Prime Minister is elected (cf. *ibid.* 11). Moreover, as established within the first instalment, the image of the Ministry seems to be run by “buffoons with relatively little magical power” (Sterling-Folker and Folker in Nexon 144), as the acting Minister, Cornelius Fudge, often “pelts Dumbledore with owls every morning, askin’ fer advice” (Rowling, *Stone* 74-75). Even though, as the series progresses, the Ministry turns out to be a much more complex, multi-layered institution fraught with corruption, the hunger for more power, and which “run by self-interested bureaucrats bent on increasing and protecting their power, often to the detriment of the public at large” (Barton 1525).

Throughout the course of the series, Harry meets and observes comparatively few Ministry officials in person. Most notably it is Cornelius Fudge, Barthemius Crouch, the aforementioned Alastor Moody, Dolores Umbridge, Rufus Scrimgeour, the members of the Wizard Examinations Authority (WEA), Elphias Doge, Kingsley Shacklebot and Arthur Weasley with whom Harry interacts directly. While Fudge, Umbridge, Shacklebot and Weasley are middle-aged, Moody, Crouch, Scrimgeour, the members of the WEA and Doge are described as grizzled, elderly, old or ancient (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 90, 184; *Order* 710; *Prince* 10; *Hallows* 24). The focus in the following will lie on the latter two categories of old and ancient.

Rufus Scrimgeour, previously Head of the Auror office in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, succeeds Cornelius Fudge as Minister of Magic after Fudge fails to accept the return of Voldemort as truth and similarly fails to reign in the chaos erupting after the Dark Lord's return (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 10, 27). Upon meeting Scrimgeour, the Prime Minister's

first, foolish thought was that Rufus Scrimgeour looked rather like an old lion. There were streaks of gray in his mane of tawny hair and his bushy eyebrows; he had keen yellowish eyes behind a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles and a certain rangy, loping grace even though he walked with a slight limp (Rowling, *Prince* 10).

Furthermore, Scrimgeour is described as using a walking stick (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 227), having an air “of shrewdness and toughness” (ibid.) around him, looking “tough and battle-scarred, very different from portly Fudge in his bowler hat” (Rowling, *Prince* 228) and being, generally, able and a “more decisive and forceful personality than Cornelius” (Rowling, *Prince* 40). Even though the public greets his ascend to power with great enthusiasm (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 27) because his looks and previous role within the ministry point to a leader whom the public prefers in times of danger (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 10), Scrimgeour is greeted with less enthusiasm by one of the other power players within the Wizarding community, Albus Dumbledore, who evades Harry's question whether Scrimgeour is “good” (Rowling, *Prince* 40) by telling him that

“He is able, certainly. [...]”  
 “Yes, but I meant —”  
 “I know what you meant. Rufus is a man of action and, having fought Dark wizards for most of his working life, does not underestimate Lord Voldemort” (ibid.).

Both, Dumbledore and Scrimgeour, are not in open conflict with each other, however their opinions regarding Harry's role within the Ministry's opposition of Voldemort differ greatly. Thus, when Scrimgeour approaches Harry at Christmas, pretending to have been in the area for work (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 227), he reveals that

“I've wanted to meet you for a very long time,” said Scrimgeour, after a few moments. “Did you know that?”  
 “No,” said Harry truthfully.  
 “Oh yes, for a very long time. But Dumbledore has been very protective of you,” said Scrimgeour. “Natural, of course, natural, after what you've been through... Especially what happened at the Ministry...”  
 He waited for Harry to say something, but Harry did not oblige, so he went on, “I have been hoping for an occasion to talk to you ever since I gained office, but Dumbledore has — most understandably, as I say — prevented this” (Rowling, *Prince* 228).

All through the exchange, the Minister remains pleasant, light and friendly (cf. ibid.), yet, showing an in-depth knowledge of how fickle the public opinion is and how to boost morale amongst the subjects of the Wizarding society, when he notes that Harry's role as ‘the Chosen One’ matters tremendously

to the Wizarding community at large...it's all perception, isn't it? It's what people believe that's important. [...] People believe you are ‘the Chosen One,’ you see, [t]hey think you quite the hero — which, of course, you are, Harry, chosen or not! [...] [Y]ou are a symbol of hope for many, Harry. The idea that there is somebody out there who might be able, who might

even be destined, to destroy He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named — well, naturally, it gives people a lift. And I can't help but feel that, once you realize this, you might consider it, well, almost a duty, to stand alongside the Ministry, and give everyone a boost (ibid.).

Moreover, should Harry be willing, Scrimgeour is prepared to use this role for promotional and propaganda matters, as Harry's involvement would simultaneously mean an approval of the Ministry's agendas (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 230) in the eyes of onlookers. Even if Scrimgeour is pleasant enough in this conversation, probably preying on a lack of understanding or lack of loyalty to Dumbledore on Harry's part (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 230), Harry's refusal to take up this role has the Minister abandoning all pretence of warmth immediately, as "his expression hardened instantly", being "not as successful at keeping anger out of his voice" (ibid.) any longer and revealing their meeting as an attempt to ensure Harry's commitment to the Ministry in order to cement his own power further and to lift the morale of his subjects. Yet, Harry is "Dumbledore's man through and through" (Rowling, *Prince* 231) and thus Scrimgeour's plan does not come to fruition. Later on, Harry learns that Scrimgeour tries to control Hogwarts and its headmaster, who describes him as nosy (Rowling, *Prince* 237) but implies that Scrimgeour is falling into the same trap that, according to Harry, had cost Fudge his job as Harry notes that Fudge "tried interfering at Hogwarts. You might have noticed he's not Minister anymore, but Dumbledore's still headmaster. I'd leave Dumbledore alone, if I were you" (Rowling, *Prince* 231). Moreover, the Minister, whereas Fudge was bumbling, blind but retained a certain kindness (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 708; *Prince* 10), is shrewd and not above using a moment of great tragedy such as Dumbledore's funeral to try to push his agenda forward as he approaches Harry after the funeral:

"What do you want?" asked Harry flatly. Scrimgeour looked annoyed but, as before, hastily modified his expression to one of sorrowful understanding.

[...]

"What do you want?" Harry repeated, coming to a halt. Scrimgeour stopped too, leaned on his stick and stared at Harry, his expression shrewd now.

[...]

"The Ministry can offer you all sorts of protection, you know, Harry. I would be delighted to place a couple of my Aurors at your service —" (Rowling, *Prince* 423-424)

He is forced to abandon his plan yet again. In the beginning of *Deathly Hallows* Harry notes that Scrimgeour leans on his walking stick, looking "much older than the last time they had met, scraggy and grim" (Rowling, *Hallows* 122) but still showing the same shrewdness displayed earlier (cf. ibid. 123).

Throughout the events of *The Half-Blood Prince* and the beginning of *Deathly Hallows* Scrimgeour is compared to a lion and a bird of prey (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 124), literally and figuratively stalking those he seeks to control and who are valuable to him and pouncing on them when he has a chance to do so. He is opposed to Voldemort but he is not aligned with Dumbledore either being very critical of Dumbledore's dealings and Harry's seemingly unending loyalty to him. In addition, he is concerned, though not overtly so, with his own power position within the society, which necessarily earns him respect. He tries to form a bulwark against dark forces, which ultimately fails as he is gradually surrounded by followers of the Dark Lord (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 5-6).

Scrimgeour, although his age is not known<sup>19</sup>, conforms in character and behaviour largely to one of the three most prevalent stereotypes of old age, that of an elderly statesman, who is an experienced and well-respected politician, intelligent, competitive, aggressive and not afraid to ensure his position and respect among the community (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 7). In this case, his age feeds into his position as knowledge and experience, which he shows during his conversations with Harry and in his handling of the public, can only be gained through advancing years. This also aligns him with the often used associations of old age with authority, experience, knowledge, hierarchy and security (Miquel-Baldellou 173). Yet, because of his political position, his authority is not only ensured by his age and experience, but also by the legal and formal processes that underline such a position. Moreover, his descriptions as an old lion, walking with a stick and limping also show a problematic and stigmatised old body which is very much contrasted by his intelligence, knowledge and a certain kind of danger emanating from him, as he is compared to a predator. Yet, the contrast of a youthful, flexible and ageless identity within (cf. Biggs, 'Choosing Not To Be Old?' 554) an old, and in his case more or less disabled but certainly stigmatised, body proposes the mask of ageing, which "is conceived as inflexible, inhibiting participation in positive elements of postmodernity as it becomes increasingly difficult to see a youthful self behind it" (ibid.). Even though the physical manifestations are not hidden behind a social facade, or a masquerade, old age is seen as inhibiting in physical terms, and yet as positive in mental terms.

The second Ministry employee who will be featured in this chapter is Elphias Doge, or, as Rita Skeeter calls him "old Dodgy Doge" (Rowling, *Hallows* 24), a "Special Advisor to the Wizengamot [...], longstanding friend of Albus Dumbledore's" (ibid.) who is 116 years old<sup>20</sup>. He is described as "an old wizard [with a] cloud of white hair [making] him look rather like an aged dandelion clock [...] [which was] topped by a moth-eaten fez" and who had "a rather high-pitched, wheezy voice" (Rowling, *Hallows* 151). Rita Skeeter, a sensational and often rude journalist, describes him as "the dim-witted but devoted sidekick" that Dumbledore had "picked up at school" (Rowling, *Hallows* 353), a devotion, which is echoed by Dumbledore's younger brother Aberforth, who calls Doge an "old berk [who] [t]hought the sun shone out of [Aberforth's] brother's every orifice" (Rowling, *Hallows* 536). This devotion to Dumbledore leads Skeeter to the assertion that "'Dogbreath' Doge" (Rowling, *Hallows* 354) was one of the few outsiders privy to the inside ongoings of the Dumbledore household because he could be counted on believing Dumbledore above all else (ibid.). Following this vein, Doge himself cautions Harry to "[l]et nothing tarnish your memories of Albus Dumbledore" (Rowling, *Hallows* 152), which causes Harry to feel, upon looking into "Doge's earnest, pained face", not reassured but "frustrated. Did Doge

<sup>19</sup> Scrimgeour, assuming that he served ten years as Head of the Auror Office, like his successor Gaius Robards (1996 – 2006/2007) (cf. Rowling, *Pottermore* sec. Wizard of the Month–Harry Potter), served as an Auror through the first war (from 1970 to 1981, as he is described as battle scared) and maybe longer and completed schooling and training, is at least 50 years old. Yet, as he is explicitly coined as "old" it is assumed that he might be even older.

<sup>20</sup> Doge notes that he met Dumbledore who was born in 1881 (cf. Rowling, *Pottermore* 'Fact file Albus Dumbledore'), "at the age of eleven, on our first day at Hogwarts" (Rowling, *Hallows* 16).

really think it was that easy, that Harry could simply choose not to believe? Didn't Doge understand Harry's need to be sure, to know everything?" (ibid.). As Doge, who is more feeble than forceful (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 157), blots over the unflattering aspects of Dumbledore's youth, he is contrasted by Aunt Muriel, a rude (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 142), belching (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 153), a hundred and seven year old woman with "beaky nose, red-trimmed eyes, and feathery pink hat [that] gave her the look of a bad-tempered flamingo" (Rowling, *Hallows* 141). Muriel does not care about the norms and rules of society, or about insulting both the living and the dead, rather she speaks her mind freely, supplying Harry with the information he desires. All the while, everything "Doge d[oes] [is] sit there and bleat feebly" (Rowling, *Hallows* 157) that Dumbledore had been as he, Doge, described him in his obituary: "never proud or vain; he could find something to value in anyone, however apparently insignificant or wretched [...] the most inspiring and the best loved of all Hogwarts headmasters" (Rowling, *Hallows* 20). This certainty, as well as his sanity, are doubted most explicitly by Rita Skeeter who calls him "dodgy", "[c]ompletely gaga, seemed to think we were sitting at the bottom of Lake Windermere, kept telling me to watch out for trout" and "dogbreath" (Rowling, *Hallows* 23, 24, 354), diminishing his credibility by linking his age to a loss of mental stability as well as to questionable or lacking personal hygiene. It is this link of old age and senility or madness, and his denial of less desirable aspects of Dumbledore's, his devotion bordering on worship (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 153) of him, that throws his credibility as a source of knowledge into doubt – even more so, as he is quite publicly not only insulted, but later on proven wrong by the book 'The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore' (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 23). Delusion, or the active blocking out of negative memories, as well as the indication of madness do not quite undermine, but cast in stark contrast Doge's position as another elderly statesman as he is an Advisor to the Wizengamot, the wizarding high court of law, which implies that Doge must be intelligent and probably competitive. Yet, he seems to lack the aggressiveness and implied intolerance of Scrimgeour who is younger than Doge but has advanced further in the hierarchy. Yet, both are respected and well-experienced politicians, albeit in different positions. Doge, more so than Scrimgeour, takes up the mantle as a wise advisor to others, thus, taking a more passive stance, which is hinted at by his comparison to a dandelion clock, a plant long past its prime and bloom, showing the passing of time and the slow loss of activity and which is also echoed in his exchange with Muriel and Harry, as well as in the display of the friendship between Dumbledore and Doge in which he is depicted as the passive part (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 353). His loss of mental stability and the dismissal of negative memories is furthermore symbolised by his "moth-eaten fez" (Rowling, *Hallows* 151) that rests on his head. In Doge's case the stereotype of an elderly statesman (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 7) to whom the Wizengamot and Harry turn "to draw life experiences [from] for answers to most fundamental existential questions" (Hazan 30) and the stereotype of a senile old man, as opposed to an all powerful and wise man, interfere and exist intertwined with each other in his person, the latter one feeding into the discourse of the "social construction of age as a medical problem" (cf. Estes et al. 11) which includes senility (cf. Hazan 30).

The last group of ministry employees which shall be looked at is the Wizarding Examinations Authority (WEA), a “small group of ancient-looking witches and wizards” (Rowling, *Order* 710) who examine the students during their O.W.L. and N.E.W.T. examinations. The head of the WEA is Griselda Marchbanks, a “tiny, stooped witch with a face so lined it looked as though it had been draped in cobwebs” (Rowling, *Order* 710), is a former member of the Wizengamot who resigned her post in “protest at the introduction of the post of Inquisitor to Hogwarts. ‘Hogwarts is a school, not an outpost of Cornelius Fudge’s office,’ said Madam Marchbanks. ‘This is a further disgusting attempt to discredit Albus Dumbledore’” (Rowling, *Order* 308). Professor Tofty, another examiner, is also described in a little more detail, as “what looked like the very oldest and baldest examiner [with a] quavery old voice” (Rowling, *Order* 713), who sought to calm the students before their examinations and forgot an exam due to his outrage while witnessing an attack on Minerva McGonagall on the school grounds (cf. Rowling, *Order* 721–722). Whereas her age is not specified, Marchbanks notes that she “[e]xamined [Dumbledore] personally in Transfiguration and Charms when he did his N.E.W.T.s” (Rowling, *Order* 710) in 1898, thus, she must have had completed her own N.E.W.T.s as well as a three to five year traineeship completed by then, making her at least 20 years old in 1898 and approximately 117 years old during Harry Potter’s O.W.L.s. Marchbanks, who is well-respected, apart from her outspoken protest against the machinations of the Ministry, uses her own advanced age to her advantage, enabling her to openly state her dislike:

Umbridge was speaking to her very deferentially. Professor Marchbanks seemed to be a little deaf; she was answering Umbridge very loudly considering that they were only a foot apart. “Journey was fine, journey was fine, we’ve made it plenty of times before!” she said impatiently. “Now, I haven’t heard from Dumbledore lately!” she added, peering around the hall as though hopeful he might suddenly emerge from a broom cupboard. “No idea where he is, I suppose?” (Rowling, *Order* 710 – 711).

Upon Umbridge’s assertion that the Ministry will eventually track Dumbledore down (ibid.), Marchbanks expresses her doubt, stating that the Ministry will not find Dumbledore “if Dumbledore doesn’t want to be found! I should know...[...] Did things with a wand I’d never seen before...” (Rowling, *Order* 711). Later on, during the examinations and in interactions with others, her voice returns to a normal level, pointing to the fact that Marchbanks consciously uses and performs the presumptions of her advanced years. Her age is shown in biomedical terms that construct age as a problem, as she is stooped and, presumably, a little deaf. Moreover, as her face is not only wrinkled but lined as if draped in cobwebs, which hints not only at her age but also at a certain outdatedness seemingly surrounding her. In this case, an intertwining between the hyperbolic stigmata of age and disease is made, perpetuating one of the most common discourses and stereotypes (Danowski 336) that is often seen simply as a failure to conform to the standards of the hegemonic class, in this case the in-group of the young (cf. Hazan 28). Yet, Marchbanks is aware of the stereotypes surrounding her ancient exterior, choosing not to cover these undesirable traits or to conform to the aforementioned standard, but instead choosing to subvert these notions in performing an ageing subject position, that of the bowed and deaf old woman, consciously, and thus, mimicking the stereotype and simultaneously,

as “mimicry is never very far from mockery” (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Triffin 105-106), performing a clear parody of it. This parody, even though it is used to openly discredit Umbridge in front of others, shows an acute awareness of the self being a looking glass self, accessible through the eyes of others (cf. Hepworth in Biggs, ‘Choosing not to be Old?’ 558). She constructs her own role “out of the same materials from which others have first construct[ed] a social [...] identification” (Goffman, *Stigma* 106) using it to break through “significant social constraints [that] are placed on self-expression” (ibid. 564) by the appropriating the stereotypes surrounding her age and using them to her benefit. Yet, these stereotypes are belied by her respected position in the community and the Ministry, where she is valued and provided with meaningful activities within the field of education.

### 3.2.4 The Scholars

The scholars in the Wizarding world, within and outside of Hogwarts, are numerous, yet do not feature prominently within the series. For the better part of *Harry Potter* only few are described in more detail and even fewer of them are truly old. For example, Nicolas Flamel and his achievements in alchemy are mentioned in *The Philosopher's Stone* but he himself is never described in physical terms, Adalbert Waffling and Newt Scamander are only referred to as the authors of schoolbooks, Minerva McGonagall who was born in 1935<sup>21</sup> and whose “appearance, [...] personality, and [...] pedagogy conjure images of a stereotypical school- marm: a strict woman teacher with a keen sense of discipline, a regard for school protocol, and a strong appeal for diligent studying and hard work” (Birch 108) is not once described as old, not even in derogatory terms, and Filius Flitwick is referred to as ‘old’ (cf. Rowling, *Order* 311) but is not sufficiently described to warrant further analysis. The other teachers of Hogwarts, although most can be termed as scholars, are, as in Severus Snape’s, most of the Defence Against the Dark Arts teachers’, and Sibyl Trelawney’s cases too young. Hagrid, although well over sixty<sup>22</sup>, cannot be properly described as old as he is a so called halfbreed, and seems to age slower than humans. Pomona Sprout is only referred to as a “dumpy little witch” (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 106), and, apart from Professor Binns, the others are only named in passing. Thus, of most scholars only Cuberth Binns and, mentioned in the first and last book, Bathilda Bagshot remain for analysis.

Professor Binns, who teaches History of Magic, did not “let his own death get in the way of continuing to teach” (Rowling, *Goblet* 392). However, even him being a ghost does not change that History of Magic is

[e]asily the most boring class [...]. Professor Binns had been very old indeed when he had fallen asleep in front of the staff room fire and got up next morning to teach, leaving his body behind him (Rowling, *Stone* 109).

<sup>21</sup> McGonagall began teaching in Hogwarts in December 1956 (cf. Rowling, *Order* 321) after working for the Ministry for two years immediately after graduation (cf. Rowling, *Pottermore* ‘Minerva McGonagall’). This places her graduation in 1954, her first year in 1947, and her birth in 1935.

<sup>22</sup> Hagrid is a third year during the memories of Tom Riddle’s diary, who was a fifth year. Thus, Hagrid was born in 1928 or 1926 (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 47; *Chamber* 248).

Binns is described as “ancient and shrivelled [...] looking like a wrinkled old tortoise” (Rowling, *Chamber* 148, 150), with a “dry and wheezy voice” that is able to produce a “flat drone like an old vacuum cleaner” (Rowling, *Chamber* 149, 150) that possesses a soporific power (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 148; *Order* 229) “guaranteed to cause severe drowsiness within ten minutes, five in warm weather” (Rowling, *Order* 229). He is usually “serenely unaware that the class’s attention” (Rowling, *Order* 229) is not on him and is often “amazed, as always, to find the room in front of him full of people” (ibid.) when he is interrupted, as, surely “no student had ever interrupted him before, alive or dead” (Rowling, *Chamber* 149). Apart from lecturing without pausing (cf. Rowling, *Order* 228) and being unable to remember the names of his students (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 149; *Order* 357), the “most exciting thing that ever happened in his classes was his entering the room through the blackboard” (Rowling, *Chamber* 148). Yet, he is protective of his field of knowledge, stating “My subject is History of Magic, [...] I deal with, facts [...] not myths and legends” (Rowling, *Chamber* 149). Professor Binns, “like his subject, is history—a relic, old, outdated, out of touch with the students” (Birch 105), in short “[a] stereotypical bore, [...] dull and fact-driven, and focused on spewing information” (ibid.), his specialised knowledge turning him neither into a respected member of staff nor into a good teacher. Although he has, through the years, acquired an immense knowledge, he is not associated with wisdom as his knowledge is very much focussed on and derived from facts and not life-experience. Moreover, he is physically and mentally detached and disengaged from society as he is a ghost, without any material form, who seemingly does not notice that he has students before him but functions routinely, and who is part of the Hogwarts staff, which separates him spatially from the rest of the Wizarding community. As a matter of fact, he is, by Harry, even further dehumanised than his metaphysical state indicates when he is compared to both a vacuum cleaner, more a thing than a person, and a tortoise, which attaches a certain animal-like nature to him, degrading him from a former human individual to being less than an *exis* (cf. de Beauvoir 217), less than a being. In Binns, the Cartesian mind and body dualism finds its hyperbolic expression clearly in the separation of his physical manifestation and his consciousness, his mind, which continues to teach (cf. Tulle-Winton 76). Though he still holds a meaningful position by being a teacher, he is not truly engaged in it, thus, reducing History of Magic to an unwanted and meaningless subject for the students. So meaningless, in fact, that even Dolores Umbridge seems to forget to observe his lessons, as, at the end of Harry’s fifth school year, he is the only teacher whose lessons were not visited by the High Inquisitor (cf. Rowling, *Order* 309, 355, 660).

In comparison, similarly a relic of history but still very much alive is the historian Bathilda Bagshot, the author of ‘A History of Magic’ (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 51; *Hallows* 184), who is just as much defined by her age<sup>23</sup>, as “old Bathilda” (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 159, 180, 320, 333, 335) or by her questionable mental stability, because she is said to be “completely cuckoo” (Rowling, *Hallows* 158) and “gaga” (Rowling, *Hallows* 320), “the brilliance that Bathilda exhibited earlier in her life [...] now dimmed. ‘The fire’s lit,

<sup>23</sup> Bathilda Bagshot is at least 124, as, when the Dumbledore’s moved to Godric’s Hollow in approximately 1890 (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 19, 564), after Percival’s arrest, Bathilda was already an adult and came by to welcome them (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 217), meaning she was at least seventeen years of age. This makes the year 1873 Bathilda’s latest possible date of birth.

but the cauldron's empty,' 'She's nutty as squirrel poo'" (Rowling, *Hallows* 218) and thus an unreliable source. Yet, by others she is also depicted as "a fascinating old thing with the most amazing stories" (Rowling, *Hallows* 180), "sweet and doting" (ibid.), gossiping (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 156, 157, 217) and very talented in her field (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 17). All these descriptions paint the picture of a grandmotherly type, doting and kind. Yet, when Harry meets her, presuming that she might be "in no fit state to talk to him" as she "would be an extremely old woman" (Rowling, *Hallows* 218, 320), she is "moving slowly, possibly frightened of slipping on the snowy ground. Her stoop, her stoutness, her shuffling gait all gave an impression of extreme age" (Rowling, *Hallows* 333) and her "ability to sense them [despite wearing the invisibility cloak] suggested some Dumbledore-ish power that he had never encountered before" (Rowling, *Hallows* 334). When Harry observes her bathed in light in her house for the first time worsens the picture of her agedness:

She smelled bad, or perhaps it was her house. Harry wrinkled his nose as they sidled past her and pulled off the Cloak. Now that he was beside her, he realised how tiny she was; bowed down with age she came barely level with his chest. She closed the door behind them, her knuckles blue and mottled against the peeling paint, then turned and peered into Harry's face. Her eyes were thick with cataracts and sunken in folds of transparent skin, and her whole face was dotted with broken veins and liver spots. He wondered whether she could make him out at all [...] The odour of old age, of dust, of unwashed clothes and stale food intensified as she unwound a moth-eaten black shawl, revealing a head of scant white hair through which the scalp showed clearly (Rowling, *Hallows* 335).

She is tiny, bowed with age, nearly blind, her skin mottled, white haired and bad smelling – a state of degeneration that is mirrored in the state of her home which is

extremely dirty. Thick dust crunched beneath their feet, and Harry's nose detected, underneath the dank and mildewed smell, something worse, like meat gone bad. He wondered when was the last time anyone had been inside Bathilda's house to check whether she was coping (Rowling, *Hallows* 336).

Her motoric and magical skills similarly seem to decline in tandem with her body as she fumbles with the keys, lights "the candles clumsily by hand" (Rowling, *Hallows* 336), climbs "[s]lowly, wheezing a little" so that Harry is "half tempted to place his hands on stout Bathilda's backside to ensure that she did not topple over backward on top of him, which seemed only too likely" (Rowling, *Hallows* 338–339) and has seemingly forgotten that she is able to do magic (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 336). Furthermore, Harry is unable to unlock her memories and she does not speak but gestures (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 334, 338), which is later on revealed to be an effect of her being a shell for Nagini, Voldemort's snake, whose emergence results in the "old body collapsing and the great snake pouring from the place where he neck had been" (Rowling, *Hallows* 339). This image of physical and mental decrepitude is in sharp contrast with the previously described image of an amiable and gossipy lady, thus suggesting no continuous identity of the individual – in her case even an absence of a self altogether –, but a focus on a biomedical construction of old age, with the body at its centre. She is, moreover, reduced to her physical appearance which encompasses their whole being (cf. Jennings and Oró-Piqueras, 'Heroine and/or Caricature?' 74). Yet, similarly to Binns, she, even before, seemed to have been rather

detached from reality as she neither noted that Rita Skeeter took advantage of her gossipy nature, her presumed senility and her knowledge of the Dumbledores, nor had she any sense of telling what was intensely private information and what was able to be publicised, as she seemingly told both Skeeter, Muriel's mother and Lily Potter many "amazing stories about" Dumbledore (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 152, 153, 180), treating other people's private lives as history, as something to study and share. Moreover, her detachment is also implied by her diminishing brilliance which points to a receding memory and possibly to senility as Skeeter needed to use a "combination of tried-and-tested reporting techniques [to enable her] to extract enough nuggets of hard fact to string together the whole scandalous story" (Rowling, *Hallows* 355) and Harry wonders about a method to unlock Bathilda's memories (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 337) suggesting that these might be lost or buried. This loss of memory seems to be in contrast to her being a storehouse and transmitter of factual memory, for which she, in comparison to Binns, had been respected. Even though she is largely seen as self-reliant, Harry, upon seeing her house, wonders whether anyone checks up on her and supports her, as he perceives her to be less able to care for herself. While ageing as a process is "associated with fluidity and change, old age is treated as a more stable position within society and within the life course" (Gilleard and Higgs, 'Ageing Abjection' 137), which is mirrored in the continuous reference to Bagshot as being old which does not seem to have changed in more than twenty years (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 152, 180, 335). Additionally, her old age "is horrific, disgusting",

a horror at the otherness of the orphaned and decaying body. Here grey hair, wrinkled skin and sagging muscles no longer serve as sources of symbolic contrast with adult performativity, a transgressive potential realised within otherwise socially and culturally embedded lifestyles. Instead they provide the visible context within which the ageing body is transformed into the abject other, objectified old age (Gilleard and Higgs 138).

The abjection<sup>24</sup>, in this case does relate to old age as the "failure of intent, and by association, the failure to exercise 'personal' control" (Gilleard and Higgs 138). As Bathilda fails to complete menial tasks, such as cleaning, doing laundry, washing herself or moving the "chamber pot protruding from under the bed" (Rowling, *Deathly Hallows* 339) away from prying eyes, Harry reacts by wrinkling his nose in disgust upon the smells he detects. He and Hermione also engage in, as defined by Hazan, ageist behaviour, as they speak louder, in simpler sentences and slower to her (Rowling, *Hallows* 337, 338) – or even at her, as she seems to fail to react (cf. *ibid.*) – as well as, taking tasks from her such as lighting the candles (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 336) or being tempted to support her up the stairs, not in order to prevent her from falling but to prevent her from falling upon Harry himself (Rowling, *Hallows* 338; Hazan 28). Moreover, Bathilda Bagshot, as seen in the decrepit state of her home, is not only spatially disengaged from society but obviously disengaged from any living family member or friend, as her mental state

<sup>24</sup> At the core of the term abjection, as defined by Julia Kristeva, lies „the individual failure to manage one's own corporeal boundaries and the resulting failure to sustain the distinction between oneself as subject and oneself as object“ (Gilleard and Higgs 136). Moreover, it is a gendered concept, in which „[w]omen's bodies are portrayed as weak and leaky, their bodily fluids the principal sources of 'impurity' that fosters abjection and social exclusion“ (*ibid.*). In the article quoted, Gilleard and Higgs extend the term to include not only bodily fluids, but the loss of mobility, and agency through the ageing process (cf. Gilleard and Higgs 138).

and living circumstances would have been recognised easily and probably rectified by a visitor. Thus, she shows visible markers of old age, mentally and physically, stigmata which evoke disgust in the onlooker, and is neither involved in any meaningful activity, nor does she have social contact with anybody, both of which leading to her marginalisation and her dehumanisation as a consequence of this separation.

### 3.2.5 The Curious Case of Albus Dumbledore and Tom Riddle

When it comes to older characters in the *Harry Potter* series, one has, so far, only been mentioned in passing. Albus Dumbledore is one of the major characters, the headmaster of Hogwarts who holds various other offices, including the positions “Holder of the Order of Merlin (first class), Grand Sorcerer, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot [and] Supreme Mugwump” (Rowling, *Stone* 60) while also being the leader of the Order of the Phoenix, a secret society, fighting a guerrilla war against Voldemort (cf. Rowling, *Order* 67). His position within the Ministry, as the Chief Warlock, however, is susceptible to the Ministry’s general attitude towards him, as, after the return of the Dark Lord, he is “demoted [...] from Chief Warlock on the Wizengamot [...] and they’re talking about taking away his Order of Merlin, First Class, too” (Rowling, *Order* 95). Moreover, the Ministry, with which Dumbledore rarely sees eye to eye, tries to discredit him even further in voting him “out of the Chairmanship of the International Confederation of Wizards because he’s getting old and losing his grip” (ibid.) and by publicly questioning his sanity. Yet, it is implied that Dumbledore holds far more power than others within and over the Ministry – something of which Cornelius Fudge is aware and frightened (cf. ibid. 93). Thus, the campaign against Dumbledore, which also includes forcing people out of their respective jobs because of an alignment with the headmaster (cf. Rowling, *Order* 71-72), is not only motivated by the refusal to believe Voldemort’s return, but much more so with Fudge’s perception that

[...] Dumbledore’s much cleverer than he is, a much more powerful wizard, and in the early days of his Ministry he was forever asking Dumbledore for help and advice [...] But it seems that he’s become fond of power now, and much more confident. He loves being Minister of Magic, and he’s managed to convince himself that he’s the clever one and Dumbledore’s simply stirring up trouble for the sake of it (Rowling, *Order* 93-94).

As Dumbledore’s statements, however, are eventually accepted and his image is restored, Fudge is forced out of office while Dumbledore, having been proven right and having his position, yet again, stabilised, stays on as headmaster and is re-installed into his former positions. For a man who refused the offer of becoming Minister of Magic because he stated that he could not be trusted with power (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 717), he has accumulated a lot of power over the years. Not only his legitimate power, deriving from his official, political positions is seemingly immense. He is also described as a very talented and very powerful wizard in magical terms. While still in school,

[h]e not only won every prize of note that the school offered, he was soon in regular correspondence with the most notable magical names of the day, including Nicolas Flamel, the celebrated alchemist; Bathilda Bagshot, the noted historian; and Adalbert Waffling, the magical theoretician [his] future career seemed likely to be meteoric (Rowling, *Hallows* 17).

Later on, after experiencing “a much older person’s suffering” (Rowling, *Hallows* 19), Dumbledore became famous for defeating Gellert Grindlewald, his former friend, in 1945, a duel between two extraordinary wizards that inspired terror and awe in those who witnessed it (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 20). His triumph over Grindlewald, as well as his “innumerable contributions to the state of Wizarding knowledge, including his discovery of the twelve uses of dragon’s blood, [and] the wisdom he displayed in the many judgments he made while Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot” (ibid.), cemented his image as a wise man to which the population turned in times of crisis.

Apart from being a politician, a teacher and an advisor, Dumbledore is also explicitly denoted as “old”. At the beginning of *The Philosopher’s Stone* his appearance is vividly contrasted with the dullness and respectability of Privet Drive, as Dumbledore is described as

tall, thin, and very old, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were light, bright, and sparkling behind half-moon spectacles and his nose was very long and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice (6).

It is his silver hair, which “shone as brightly as the ghosts” (Rowling, *Stone* 98), his similarly silver beard, his bright blue eyes, making the onlooker feel as if they are X-rayed (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 144), and his predilection for colourful and patterned robes (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 6; *Goblet* 175) that are some of his most distinguishing features. Moreover, even though he is an old man, he “always gave an impression of great energy” (Rowling, *Prisoner* 91) and is able to “bent down, and with extraordinary strength for a man so old and thin, rais[ing] Harry from the ground and set[ting] him on his feet” (Rowling, *Goblet* 672). His age and his surprising strength are, in Harry’s eyes, in stark contrast. Dumbledore also possesses a usually cheery disposition (cf. Rowling, *Prisoner* 229), handing out candy (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 7) and revelling in being mischievous, as after having poured mead for Harry, himself and the Dursley’s, the latter, after “scared looks at one another, tried to ignore their glasses completely, a difficult feat, as they were nudging them gently on the sides of their heads. Harry could not suppress a suspicion that Dumbledore was rather enjoying himself” (Rowling, *Prince* 31). Furthermore, he is, not only by the Ministry, regarded as “not what you’d call normal” (Rowling, *Goblet* 161):

Albus Dumbledore had gotten to his feet. [...] “Welcome,” he said. “Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts! Before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak! Thank you!”  
He sat back down. Everybody clapped and cheered. Harry didn’t know whether to laugh or not. “Is he – a bit mad?” he asked Percy uncertainly.  
“Mad?” said Percy airily. “He’s a genius! Best wizard in the world! But he is a bit mad, yes” (Rowling, *Stone* 99).

Moreover, in the case of his questionable sanity in connection with his age, he is often referred to as “SOME CRACKPOT OLD FOOL” (Rowling, *Stone* 46), “an old fool” (Rowling, *Order* 217), “that Muggle-loving fool” (Rowling, *Goblet* 657) by others, but he refers to himself similarly, stating “I acted exactly as Voldemort expects we fools who love to act” (Rowling, *Order* 838), noting that the lure of power had made him a fool (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 713), and allowing the houseelves to “call him a — a barmy old codger if we likes, sir!” (Rowling, *Goblet* 380). Yet, he notes that his “memory is as good as it ever was”

(Rowling, *Prisoner* 391) even though he feels as if he has “too many thoughts and memories crammed into [his] mind [thus he] siphons the excess thoughts from [his] mind pour[ing] them into the basin, and examin[ing] them at leisure” (Rowling, *Goblet* 597). Thus, it is never his memory, that is threatened by his age, but his sanity.

It is during the course of *The Goblet of Fire* that Harry’s image of Dumbledore, from the kindly, grandfatherly exterior (Rowling, *Stone* 6), supported by odd quirks and “a twinkle in his eyes” (Rowling, *Stone* 241), begins to change. This is hinted at by Harry’s observation of Dumbledore bent over the aforementioned Pensieve, that its “silvery light [...] illuminated Dumbledore’s face, and it struck Harry suddenly how very old he was looking. He knew, of course, that Dumbledore was getting on in years, but somehow he never really thought of Dumbledore as an old man” (Rowling, *Goblet* 599). Dumbledore, in Harry’s eyes, is “looking older than ever” (Rowling, *Goblet* 604). Moreover, Harry is more often privy to the image of Dumbledore which made him an exceptionally powerful wizard:

He looked around and saw the three of them standing in the doorway, Dumbledore in front, his wand outstretched. At that moment, Harry fully understood for the first time why people said Dumbledore was the only wizard Voldemort had ever feared. The look upon Dumbledore’s face as he stared down at the unconscious form of Mad-Eye Moody was more terrible than Harry could have ever imagined. There was no benign smile upon Dumbledore’s face, no twinkle in the eyes behind the spectacles. There was cold fury in every line of the ancient face; a sense of power radiated from Dumbledore as though he were giving off burning heat (Rowling, *Goblet* 679).

Yet, even in anger Dumbledore shows a high level of self-control, as his “blue eyes were blazing, though his voice remained calm” (ibid.). In this case, even though the image is to provide a glimpse of Dumbledore’s power, his age is still a non-negotiable fact, as Harry notes the “line[s] of the ancient face” (ibid.) even in a moment of peril. His powerful persona also contrasts vividly with Fudge after the latter accuses Harry of hallucinating the return of the Dark Lord:

“Listen to me, Cornelius,” said Dumbledore, taking a step toward Fudge, and once again, he seemed to radiate that indefinable sense of power [...]. Fudge had taken half a step back from Dumbledore, but he looked no less stubborn. [...]  
 “If your determination to shut your eyes will carry you as far as this, Cornelius,” said Dumbledore, “we have reached a parting of the ways. You must act as you see fit. And I — I shall act as I see fit.” Dumbledore’s voice carried no hint of a threat; it sounded like a mere statement, but Fudge bristled as though Dumbledore were advancing upon him with a wand (Rowling, *Goblet* 705–709).

Even without drawing a wand, Dumbledore’s power and authority, and by extent the possibility of him being a threat, is palpable causing Fudge to step back. Moreover, Fudge’s stubbornness and blindness, the sheer refusal to see truth and act upon it, which can also be applied to the Ministry at large, is contrasted by an open-minded, intelligent, active and powerful leader who is able to take the steps necessary to ensure the safety of others and who, as a result, becomes a figure of hope (cf. Rowling, *Prisoner* 329). Yet, Dumbledore is not only a benign leader. He is, as Harry finds out during *The Deathly Hallows*, a puppet master planning and scheming, working towards the goal of bringing the Dark Lord’s downfall and concentrating on the greater good instead of on individual fates. Dumbledore admits this to Harry:

Five years ago you arrived at Hogwarts, Harry, safe and whole, as I had planned and intended. Well — not quite whole. You had suffered. I knew you would when I left you on your aunt and uncle’s doorstep. I knew I was condemning you to ten dark and difficult years (Rowling, *Order* 835).

Harry, in turn, realises the extent of Dumbledore’s machinations after viewing Snape’s memories:

Finally, the truth.... Of course there had been a bigger plan; Harry had simply been too foolish to see it, he realised that now. He had never questioned his own assumption that Dumbledore wanted him alive. [...] Dumbledore had passed the job of destroying them to him, and obediently he had continued [...] (Rowling, *Hallows* 691-693).

Indicators, that Dumbledore had been trying to find a way to triumph over evil as well as that Harry is, at first, more a pawn in this game than anything else, are to be found right at the beginning of the series as he tells Harry that the answer to the question why Voldemort is trying to kill him cannot be answered yet (Rowling, *Stone* 241) and, later, after Harry’s blood is taken by Voldemort, making it possible for the latter one to touch Harry, “a gleam of something like triumph” (Rowling, *Goblet* 696) appears in Dumbledore’s eyes. Yet, “when Dumbledore had returned to his seat behind the desk, he looked as old and weary as Harry had ever seen him” (ibid.). It is not only Harry whom Dumbledore manipulates but also Severus Snape of whom he demands a return for protecting the Potters to which Snape replies: “Anything” (Rowling, *Hallows* 678). This “anything” turns out to be a promise which Dumbledore extracts shortly after the death of Lily and James Potter, during the time in which Snape is at his most vulnerable:

“Her son lives. He has her eyes, precisely her eyes. You remember the shape and colour of Lily Evans’s eyes, I am sure?”  
 “DON’T!” bellowed Snape. “Gone . . . dead . . . ”  
 “Is this remorse, Severus?”  
 “I wish ... I wish I were dead ...”  
 “And what use would that be to anyone?” said Dumbledore coldly. “If you loved Lily Evans, if you truly loved her, then your way forward is clear.”  
 Snape seemed to peer through a haze of pain, and Dumbledore’s words appeared to take a long time to reach him.  
 “What—what do you mean?”  
 “You know how and why she died. Make sure it was not in vain. Help me protect Lily’s son” (Rowling, *Hallows* 679).

By knowing that Snape, in this moment, would do anything to have a purpose and to avenge Lily Potter, a moment in which he would not closely evaluate any promise but agree to it, Dumbledore uses Snape’s vulnerable state to ensure loyalty and, eventually, the completion of his plans. Although Dumbledore tells the Order that he trusts Snape implicitly, his stance on sharing information with Snape in particular, but also on sharing information in general is expressed by his statement that he “prefer[s] not to put all of my secrets in one basket” (Rowling, *Hallows* 684). Thus, Harry, Snape and the Order more often than not operate while having only few information. Yet, their trust in Dumbledore (cf. Rowling, *Prisoner* 91; *Prince* 221), his intelligence, knowledge and power which are interconnected with his approachable persona, is enough to accept his statements as facts and to carry out plans which are tightly controlled by the headmaster. Problematic are, therefore, those

moments in which Dumbledore fails to be a source of safety and comfort, in which he himself shows weakness. Thus Harry, as “Dumbledore closed his eyes and buried his face in his long-fingered hands [in an] uncharacteristic sign of exhaustion, or sadness” (Rowling, *Order* 834), “felt even angrier that Dumbledore was showing signs of weakness. He had no business being weak when Harry wanted to rage and storm at him” (ibid.). Moreover, during the events of *The Half-Blood Prince*, Harry is horrified when he notices that Dumbledore’s face is “paler and damper than ever”, his voice and body weakened beyond compare (382). Even more so, after Dumbledore had died, the Order remains behind leaderless, hopeless and in disarray (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 405–410), most of their plans abandoned. Yet, these moments also show, that, above all, Dumbledore is a human being who, as he notes makes “mistakes like the next man. In fact, being [...] rather cleverer than most men, [his] mistakes tend to be correspondingly huger” (Rowling, *Prince* 132), and who cares, or even cares too much about Harry’s “happiness than [him] knowing the truth, more for [his] peace of mind than [Dumbledore’s] plan, more for [his] life than the lives that might be lost if the plan failed” (Rowling, *Order* 838).

Dumbledore’s power and influence is more often than not contrasted with others. Yet, it is not the passive politicians that are the main point of comparison but first and foremost Tom Riddle, the Dark Lord. Dumbledore is, according to McGonagall, the “only one You-Know- oh, all right, Voldemort, was frightened of” (Rowling, *Stone* 8) and that Dumbledore is only too noble to use the powers at his disposal (cf. ibid.). This point is further driven home by Molly Weasley’s assertion that “the last thing we want is Dumbledore locked up. While You-Know-Who knows Dumbledore’s out there and wise to what he’s up to, he’s going to go cautiously for a while. If Dumbledore’s out of the way — well, You-Know-Who will have a clear field” (Rowling, *Order* 95). He appears to be the only bulwark protecting the Wizarding society from Voldemort. His function as a protector, not only of society but also of Harry, becomes clear when, after the battle in the Department of Mysteries, Dumbledore arrives just in the nick of time to save him:

“I have nothing more to say to you, Potter,” he said quietly. “You have irked me too often, for too long. AVADA KEDAVRA!”

Harry had not even opened his mouth to resist. His mind was blank, his wand pointing uselessly at the floor. But the headless golden statue of the wizard in the fountain had sprung alive, leaping from its plinth, and landed on the floor with a crash between Harry and Voldemort. The spell merely glanced off its chest as the statue flung out its arms, protecting Harry. “What — ?” said Voldemort, staring around. And then he breathed, “Dumbledore!” Harry looked behind him, his heart pounding. Dumbledore was standing in front of the golden gates (Rowling, *Order* 813).

Voldemort, a “tall and skeletally thin” man with a face “[w]hiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils” (Rowling, *Goblet* 643), is a match for Dumbledore, possessing powers that Dumbledore does not have and who is a “wizard who went... bad. As bad as you could go. Worse. Worse than worse” (Rowling, *Stone* 42). Voldemort, who had been tall and handsome in his youth, with jet-black hair and pale (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 224; 331; *Prince* 178), is also shown as ruthless, cruel, merciless, and sadistic, showing as little mercy to his followers as to his enemies (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 240; *Goblet* 648; *Prince* 19; *Hallows* 7, 9), and having no need for

companionship. He began his slow ascend to power during his school years by becoming prefect and headboy (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 224; 231), and by gathering

about him a group of dedicated friends; I call them that, for want of a better term, although as I have already indicated, Riddle undoubtedly felt no affection for any of them. This group had a kind of dark glamour within the castle. They were a motley collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish gravitating toward a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty. [...] Rigidly controlled by Riddle, they were never detected in open wrongdoing, although their seven years at Hogwarts were marked by a number of nasty incidents to which they were never satisfactorily linked (Rowling, *Prince* 240).

Up to the point of his graduation, Riddle's and Dumbledore's paths are not that different. Both come from modest but stigmatised backgrounds as Riddle is an orphan and Dumbledore the son of a Muggle hater (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 16). Both are talented and intelligent, highly praised by their teachers, and both occupy high positions within the school. Yet, whereas Riddle gathers followers, Dumbledore seeks friends. Whereas Riddle is obsessed with his lineage (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 240), Dumbledore notes that it "matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be" (Rowling, *Goblet* 708), and whereas Riddle is not above using the power he has in order to gain more power, Dumbledore is aware that "perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it" (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 718). Voldemort in his ascend as well as in later years is independent, relying not even on his followers, but only himself, which is why the extensions of himself, his Horcruxes ensuring his continuing survival are entrusted to only two followers whereas the rest are stored away only able to be accessed by the Dark Lord himself (cf. Rowling, *Chamber* 337; *Prince* 19). Additionally, while Dumbledore admits having made mistakes but learns from them, Voldemort acknowledges his mistakes but never learns from them. Instead, he seeks to make hay of his missteps, openly revealing them and similarly showing how this might turn out to be in his favour (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 652-655). Even though he possesses "knowledge of magic [which] is perhaps more extensive than [that of] any wizard alive" (Rowling, *Order* 835) he fails to see the bigger picture and shows an inattention to events, powers, and human traits that are not immediately useful to him. For instance, he never considers love, an "ancient magic of which he knows, which he despises, and which he has always underestimated" (ibid.), to be truly powerful. As he does not value this power,

he takes no trouble to comprehend [it]. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped (Rowling, *Hallows* 709).

Yet, it is, by extent, the love Snape holds for Lily Potter and, in turn, Lily's, Snape's and Dumbledore's protection of Harry, that causes the Dark Lord's downfall.

Another major difference is Dumbledore's and Voldemort's perspective of and attitude towards death, a discourse which is often intertwined with the discourse of ageing. Dumbledore defines death as the next great adventure for the well-prepared mind (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 240), talking about it in a "tone [that] was conversational; he might have been asking for a weather forecast" (Rowling, *Prince*

681) and asserting that there are “other ways of destroying a man [...] there are things much worse than death” (Rowling, *Order* 814). On the other hand, Voldemort’s name translates roughly into flight from death<sup>25</sup> indicating his desire to evade death and by extent old age completely, echoed as he notes that he has taken the steps necessary “to guard [himself] against mortal death” (Rowling, *Goblet* 648), having “gone further than anybody along the path that leads to immortality [as his goal is] to conquer death”(cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 653). In order to do so, he split his soul in multiple parts and enclosed these into an object each. Thus, even if “one’s body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged. But of course, existence in such a form [...] ... few would want it [...]. Death would be preferable” (Rowling, *Prince* 327). Yet, this practice is “an act of violation, it is against nature” which can only take place if one commits “the supreme act of evil. By committing murder. Killing rips the soul apart. The wizard intent upon creating a Horcrux would use the damage to his advantage [...]” (ibid.). Creating seven Horcruxes seemingly ensures Voldemort’s immortality, as he, after being “ripped from [his] body, was less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost... but still, [he] was alive” (Rowling, *Goblet* 653; *Prince* 327). Moreover, he, being an inch away from death, ensures his survival by taking possession of a younger body (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 240) and by drinking unicorn blood which comes “at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips” (Rowling, *Stone* 207). He also attempts to steal the philosopher’s stone, which would grant him immortality in the form of the Elixir of Life as well as by “a spell or two of [his] own invention ... a little help from [...] dear Nagini [...] a potion concocted from unicorn blood, and the snake venom Nagini provided...[he] was soon returned to an almost human form” (Rowling, *Goblet* 656). Thus, he “was willing to embrace mortal life again, before chasing immortality” and settling for his old body and old strength (Rowling, *Goblet* 656). Immortality and the fear of death, and by extent old age, the latter of which Dumbledore and by extent Harry embrace, is a recurring character trait of Voldemort (cf. Rowling, *Hallows* 710) who is “crazed, frenzied” and in denial (Rowling, *Hallows* 549) when he finds that Harry has discovered his “treasures, his safeguards, his anchors to immortality” (Rowling, *Hallows* 550). Whereas Voldemort embodies the futile search for biological and mental immortality, Dumbledore embodies symbolic immortality (cf. Greenberg et al. 32). The latter one is still fondly remembered and spoken about, has left numerous contributions to Wizarding knowledge, has been deeply involved in political and cultural matters within society and is connected with “entities that will endure indefinitely [...] such as cultural institutions” (Greenberg et al. 32), while Voldemort cannot use the “possibilities of death transcendence through literal or symbolic forms of immortality” (ibid.) as he neither offers cultural achievements by which he would be remembered nor does he occupy a position by which death transcendence could be attained and sustained (cf. ibid.). Thus, Voldemort will only be remembered as the meanest of ghosts, a truly evil wizard, defeated and fooled in the end by Harry Potter.

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**25** As the french word „vol“ can mean both flight and theft, only the former translation is used as it confers more with Voldemort’s behaviour and his creation of the Horcruxes.

Voldemort, who, being born in 1926, is 72 upon his death, and Dumbledore who is 116, being born in 1881, are both older men and, moreover, embody two different approaches towards ageing. Dumbledore, who can be, in archetypal terms, referred to as a wise old man, “represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help” (Jung 222) and he has the tendency to appear “when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reaction or a lucky idea [...] can extricate him” (Jung 217). He is also an ageing academic, presenting “an aged or somehow ageless character who is likely to be a caricature rather than a well-rounded character” (Popovich and Noonan 162) while simultaneously presenting “a positive picture of ageing as a time of growth, emancipation, and even the acquisition of wisdom” (ibid.). Yet, he defies both stereotypes, because his character is fully fleshed out, becoming more and more human and rather a person than a position throughout the series, and because he possesses an insight into human nature and the society of the Wizarding world that belies the detachment from the material world which Popovich and Noonan propose. Furthermore, Dumbledore also displays qualities detrimental to the aforementioned goodwill as he can be similarly selfish, cold, and manipulative – traits which, moreover, make him seem more human and less a super human being whose “magical powers and [...] spiritual superiority suggest that, in good and bad alike, he is outside, or above, or below the human level” (Jung 230). Even though his ageing process is described in mostly bodily terms, focusing on the lines on his face, him looking ancient and the exhaustion evident in his features, he is not described in terms of physical or mental decrepitude or decline. Instead his old exterior is often contrasted with his magical prowess, his energy and the surprising strength and agility of which he is still capable. Thus, even if the descriptions derive from a biomedical perspective on the ageing process in which the body, as “the only tangible manifestation of the person” (Bourdieu in Woodward, *Understanding Identity* 104), is a key element, Dumbledore’s ageing does not become an abnormal condition (cf. de Beauvoir 285). Yet, his age is still used, in close connection with waning mental and physical capabilities by Death Eaters as well as by the Ministry who claim Dumbledore to be growing old in order to legitimise negative attitudes, derision and slander against him. Hence, between the in-group of the light side and the out-groups of the Death Eaters and the Ministry, his age becomes a determining factor of social difference which is used to marginalise him. Yet, as these out-groups are infiltrated by people loyal to Dumbledore, the separation does not entirely work as the Ministry is not able to oust him from all of his posts nor is it able to quell the trust and veneration that the public and Hogwarts seemingly have for Dumbledore. Even within the in-group of the light side, which is again split in subgroups of adulthood, youth and old age, Dumbledore might be regarded as slightly mad, but he is, regardless of his age, revered and trusted. As a result, the social marker age with its stigmata of white hair and wrinkles is never used for exclusion techniques but is often overridden by Dumbledore’s central function as a leader and a headmaster, both meaningful activities in which he is engaged in. In him,

old age [i]s a stage of development in which the passions of youth and the efforts of a life career had reached fruition and consolidation: there is a certain maturity of judgement

about men, things, causes and life generally, that nothing in the world but years can bring, a real wisdom that only age can teach (Hall in Harven 119, 120).

In contrast to the “purified image [...] that society offers the aged is that of the whitehaired and venerable sage, rich in experience, planing high above the common state of mankind: if they vary from this, then they fall below it” (de Beauvoir 4), which he to a certain extent embodies. Dumbledore is integrated in society, engaged in meaningful activities and humanised by having wishes, fears, emotions and desires. This rounding of the character, however, is only possible as Harry starts to spend more and more time with him, seeing the out-group of old age as heterogeneous and elderly persons as an ever-present part of the social network (cf. Greenberg et al. 42). This interdependence between the age-groups which undercuts common stereotypes by exposure to stereotype-incongruent information (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 16) such as the physical and magical strength of which the old body is capable. Apart from the venerable old sage, Dumbledore takes up the mantle of a fool by behaving the opposite way society norms prescribe him to. His style of dress is eccentric, both in the magical world and within the Muggle world, as he wears “magnificent deep green robes embroidered with many stars and moons” (Rowling, *Goblet* 175), a “purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots” (Rowling, *Stone* 6) or a “flamboyantly cut suit of plum velvet” (Rowling, *Prince* 174) respectively. Although he is aware that his style is peculiar to others, he does not particularly care about it (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 6; *Prince* 174) and he is aware of the disruption of social norms he causes. In contrast to Mrs. Figg, these “lapses of dress [which] do not just offend against the performance norms of the social space but signal a social and moral decline that may threaten a person’s capacity to remain part of mainstream society” (Twigg in Küpper 134) do not cause his separation from society but are, instead, used consciously to create an eccentric, slightly odd, social facade for Dumbledore that distracts onlookers from realising the power and the potential that lies beneath. These eccentric props, moreover, show the unnaturalness of the image of the sage which is attributed to him by directly negating dress norms and, thus, performing a parody of them. This process can be seen as a form of mimicry in which the awareness of the social regulation enables social actors to renegotiate and undermine these. Furthermore, his behaviour too, is unlike the venerable old sage that Beauvoir describes as he freely speaks his mind, often to the embarrassment or amusement of others. Thus, he compliments Rita Skeeter’s article to be “[e]nchantingly nasty [...] particularly enjoy[ing] [her] description of [him] as an obsolete dingbat” (Rowling, *Goblet* 307), or amusingly reproaching Igor Karkaroff in underpinning his remark that he does not know all the secrets Hogwarts holds with a brief story about private matters, such as bathrooms and full bladders (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 418), which leads to Harry snorting “into his plate of goulash” (ibid.) and to mounting embarrassment for those around him. Additionally, he does not seem to be bothered by others people’s rudeness, admonishing Vernon Dursley in a roundabout way: “I would assume that you were going to offer me refreshment,’ Dumbledore said to Uncle Vernon, ‘but the evidence so far suggests that that would be optimistic to the point of foolishness” (Rowling, *Prince* 31). Not only on these occasions, but also on the occasions in which his activity, foresight and wisdom is contrasted with the, mostly middle aged, stubborn, blinded

and power hungry employees of the Ministry, he does not let social norms or regulations attached to his roles rule his responses. Instead, he freely advises some or reproaches others for their behaviour. He amounts, thus, to the role of the jester, the fool, a “mythological figure often highly regarded” but “often described as strange and foolish, [...] ridiculed by others” (Guggenbühl-Craig pos. 1118), yet able to speak freely against all social regulations. Still, it is the combination of the old man and the role of the fool, and thus the connection of wisdom, experience and the opportunity to trespass the lines of social norms, which might bring about fruitful connotations as it allows the individual unique freedom (cf. *ibid.*) in exploring old age while still being able to retain desires and behaviours of adulthood and the highly valued middle-age as well as being permitted to show weakness and be afraid, having “no need to feign a kindly, mature serenity” (Guggenbühl-Craig pos. 1195), while simultaneously being less bound to social conventions and norms. Thus, Dumbledore portrays an attitude towards ageing that could be summarised under the heading of successful ageing, “understood as organic and effortless” (Whelehan and Gwynne 8) ageing, during which a person “maintains an integrated personality” (Estes et al. 15), remains independent and healthy and in which ageing only becomes problematic if illness befalls the body.

Contrasting Dumbledore’s effortless ageing, is Voldemort, who pursues immortality. He is, amongst his Death Eaters, presumably, the only known older man and stabilises his power by coercion, surveillance, fear and punishment, whereas Dumbledore relies on genuine respect, surveillance, trust and being well-liked and allied. Whereas Dumbledore conforms, in parts, to an elderly statesman, Voldemort does combine the stereotype of an elderly statesman with that of an ageing scholar as he, apart from his years as a leader of the Death Eaters, had been researching magic and historical artefacts wanting to become a teacher at some point (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 285). In both positions, Voldemort embodies mostly negative traits by being intelligent, competitive, aggressive, intolerant (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 7), as well as being “not only physically repulsive but also emotionally stunted; [a] monsters of cruelty, pedantry, and egotism who seek[s] power and fulfilment by persecuting others, often [his] students [and followers]” (Popovich and Noonan 163). He is also, to a certain degree, detached from reality, lacking the foresight and insight into the human psyche that Popovich and Noonan attribute to this particular stereotype. What is most notable, however, is his perception of life, death and, by extent, ageing. As old age has been seen as the *deja-la*, the ever presence or threshold, of death (cf. Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation* 15), with the “ageing discourse slid[ing] right into death discourse without critique: age death connection, that virulent stereotype” (Guellette 107), Voldemort’s flight from death does not only refer to death itself, but also to old age by association. Within the existential paradox of “[being] driven to live but knowing that the only certainty is death” (Greenberg et al. 32), Voldemort tries to deny death by finding ways to remain alive, and moreover, ways to become immortal. The unnaturalness of such a feat is stated in *The Philosopher’s Stone* when he consumes unicorn blood, which results in a “half-life, a cursed life” (240), as well as later by the assertion that such immortality can only be achieved by an act of violation against nature and an act of supreme evil (cf. Rowling, *Prince* 327). Moreover, the unnaturalness of denying age and death is underlined by

the fact that it fails time and time again, as for instance Quirrel's younger body possessed by the Dark Lord's spirit fails to touch Harry. Furthermore, he is unable to claim the Elixir of Life and, at the end, he is brought to fall by his own arrogance, thinking himself immortal, seemingly able to cheat death and the stage of old age. As people "that live by the values of self realisation and self mastery are not especially good at dying, at submitting to those experiences where freedom ends and biological fate begins" (Ignatieff, *Encountering Illness* 8), Voldemort, who believes himself to be the most powerful wizard, having realised all his dreams of his youth, is equally unable to accept the "experiences where freedom ends and biological fate begins" (ibid.). Thus, he takes to evading his biological fate completely by, for instance, trying to inhabit a willing, younger body, completely erasing the certainty of his own materiality in the construction of self. By doing so he, furthermore, masks the effects of ageing completely by possessing such a body, which, in the end, is futile as the possession slowly drains the life of the possessed (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 240). Moreover, by abandoning and re-imagining his body, he is an embodiment of a postmodern subject, having no discernible core of self but one that is a "reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent yet continuously revisited biological narratives takes place in the contexts of multiple choice" (Giddens in Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 60). By applying technologies of the self upon himself, both in biological and mental terms, he is able to inflict by his own means a "certain number of operations on [his] own bod[y] and soul, thought, conduct and way of being so as to transform [himself] in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality" (Foucault in Gilleard and Higgs 60). Not only is he, thus, able to mask all effects of ageing while, in his unnatural exterior, simultaneously "presenting the very conditions of that concealment" (Estes et al. 39) but he is also stigmatised by his appearance, which is less human and more animal-like, underpinning both, the unnaturalness of the mask as well as the futility of trying to evade ageing and death. Voldemort, in a solely biomedical sense, shows, by magical means, the "advances in biomedicine which enable us to change the body to an unprecedented degree [...] gradually undermin[ing] many of the foundational properties of human nature" (Gilleard and Higgs 128). Both is exemplified in the descriptions of Voldemort through the years. While, in the beginning, he is handsome, Dumbledore's memory of Voldemort in his late twenties presents a different picture:

[His face was] not as snake-like, the eyes were not yet scarlet, the face not yet mask-like, and yet he was no longer handsome Tom Riddle. It was as though his features had been burned and blurred; they were waxy and oddly distorted, and the whites of the eyes now had a permanently bloody look, though the pupils were not yet the slits that Harry knew they would become (Rowling, *Prince* 291).

The contrast is even more vivid when he is reborn, the constant construction and reconstruction of his body having yielded a horrific picture of pale white skin, a skeletally thin body, and dark scarlet eyes, a white face that resembled a skull, snake-like slits for nostrils, and long, thin hands with unnaturally long fingers like spider's legs, possessing neither hair nor lips (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 643; *Hallows* 3, 4, 704). Thus, not only is the masking of old age involving "an effort to restrict the display of those failings most centrally identified with the stigma" (Goffman 103) condemned to fail because of its inherent

unnaturalness but it fails in order to be a critique of the postmodern condition which avoids fixation, stagnation and keeps options open as well as recycles features. Voldemort, by “settling for his old body and old strength” (Rowling, *Goblet* 656) or simply choosing a body of his liking as well as by splitting his soul into multiple parts keeps his options open should his existing body be destroyed. Moreover, Voldemort in constructing an unnatural body, as Jones and Higgs noted, shows that these techniques, which can be seen as advances in biotechnology, “are in fact further blurring any previous distinction between the natural and the normal leading not only to fuzzy boundaries between the two but a continual reworking of both concepts” (Jones and Higgs 1517). In this respect, Voldemort embodies the approach of “‘unsuccessful’ ageing. Old age today, it seems, only befalls those too powerless, poor or stupid to do something about it – the un-Botoxed masses” (Karpf in Hubble and Tew 67). It is “marked by extreme attempts to modify appearance through fitness regimes and cosmetic intervention” (Whelehan and Gwynne 9). Although Voldemort does not employ “fitness regimes and cosmetic intervention” (ibid.) per se, he does transform himself through rituals and experiments that have “pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed” (Rowling, *Prince* 293). These modify not only his exterior but his psyche as well. Yet, Voldemort’s case also shows that not only has the project of the self its limits, but also that a mind and body split as well as the endless reconstruction of bodily materiality is futile and often impossible. Still, an implied dualism exists as Voldemort is able to choose and reconstruct, or simply possess, a new body to his liking, whereas his self remains roughly the same.

Both men, while evenly matched magically and in ability, are the flip side of each other in terms of most character traits, appearance, outlook on life and death. This exemplifies Dumbledore’s notion that “[i]t is our choices [...] that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Rowling, *Chamber* 333). Thus, in choosing to escape death and ageing by unnatural means while simultaneously clinging to his position amongst the Death Eaters, Voldemort unmasks the futility of such a notion, thus, ageing unsuccessfully. Dumbledore, meanwhile, ages successfully as he chooses to embrace the mental and physical aspects of ageing, simultaneously fleshing out new social roles and positions for himself. In connection with this point, the impossibility of immortality and the unnaturalness of trying to prevent the stable concepts of age and death (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 3) are, moreover, shown in the dehumanisation in emotional, psychological and physical terms of Voldemort, a decline that he perceives as a progress, and in contrast to the increasing humanisation of Dumbledore, whose physical decline is seen as a progress in psychological and mental terms.

### 3.3 Solutions, Conclusions and Departures

Both series, *Harry Potter* as well as *His Dark Materials* provide various outlooks on old age. Yet, a few differences need to be addressed in the following. It shall be noted, that, although the series do belong to the same genre and follow roughly similar structures, *His Dark Materials* nevertheless focusses on more than one form of being, on more than one form of living together, a contemplation which echoes the “existential state of humanity at the beginning of the new millennium, a condition where ‘the maps no longer fit the territories’” (Houston in Hunt 123). Within *His Dark Materials* various new territories are drawn by introducing highly evolved species that live in more primitive and less industrialised cultures. The series contrasts the technologically advancing reality, in which people neither know those in their vicinity nor those that occupy the same political and cultural space, with an alternative that rests on smaller, more positively displayed communities which turn towards a more intimate relationship with their environment. *Harry Potter* in comparison, provides a technologically less advanced but by no means less complex world similar to ours, with similar institutions, conflicts and inner workings. Thus, while both offer alternatives, *His Dark Materials* widens the scope, offering a broader view of possible departures, while *Harry Potter* opens a more restricted mirror image.

Although the worlds are different, their general outlook on age is comparatively similar. Both series refer to elderly characters specifically as old, extremely old or ancient and describe them in physical terms, using common, visible stigmata or markers, of age such as a stooped posture, a bent back, sporting grey, white or no hair, wrinkled, trembling, with skull-like or sunken faces that are marked by age and having spindly, skeletal or long thin fingers. Moreover, the characters have weak, wheezy, trembling, high-pitched, or deep voices – sometimes in contrast to their physical appearance, sometimes less so. From time to time, these physical markers are underlined by the aged being feeble, smelling odd, being mindless, demented, anguished, fumbling or limping. All of these attributes point to what has been noted as the problematic old body, as age has been “primarily understood in its relation to its corporeality and as inevitable, manifested in physical decrepitude” (Tulle-Winton 65). Moreover, age has been understood in a relation to illness and sickness (cf. Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 14) leading to the notion that characters are only old when they are physically or mentally sick (cf. Guellette 181). As some, if not all, older characters within the series do possess, additionally to their markers of age, markers of sickness or disability, this connection seems to be perpetuated by both series, even if it is not quite clear whether this combination is simply used to prominently emphasise the difference between the younger adults and the elderly or whether markers of sickness and disability serve a different purpose. Furthermore, this approach, drawing on biomedical assumptions of age which revolve around the body as a biological and natural construct (cf. Gilleard and Higgs 134) that functions as a social marker (cf. Shilling 88), reproducing social differences and being the bearer of symbolic value (cf. Bourdieu in Shilling 89), only describes age from the outside by focusing on those “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral character to the signifier” (Goffmann, *Stigma* 1). Old age, in both series, becomes an Unrealisable, by essentially

being “described from the outside, in terms of problems and deficits” (Jones and Higgs 71), because of which the “individual comes to feel he is old by means of others, [he is] pointed out by custom, by the behaviour of others and by the vocabulary itself [...]” (de Beauvoir 291 – 292). Yet, while *His Dark Materials* proposes a body and mind dualism, most notably seen in Farder Coram whose aged exterior covers a young, healthy soul, for which the ageing body becomes a physical cage, “reflected in outward appearance [covering] the inner, or subjective ‘real self’ which paradoxically remains young” (Hepworth, ‘Positive ageing and the Mask of Age’ 93). In contrast, *Harry Potter* seemingly offers hyperboles. By introducing Binns and Bagshot, characters which are either only mind or matter, and by showing their failures, namely to integrate into society or function in interaction, the series proposes a wholeness of mind and body which is needed in order to be a successful social actor. Yet, it does not state explicitly whether the self within is younger or if the ageing body can be seen as a cage. Instead the series explores the question of fragmentation, unity, and of renouncing or embracing age in later life by contrasting Dumbledore who is a sociological subject with a stable core of self that is constructed in relation to significant others, retaining a sense of self throughout the years while being aware of being “differently positioned at different times and in different places according to the different social roles [he is] playing” (Woodward 22), and Voldemort, a subject that may best be described as postmodern, open for transformation, change and opportunities of reconstruction. Thus, the the question of mind and body, or the Cartesian mind and body dualism that is prevalent in most of Western societies (cf. Estes et al. 37), is simplified and disregarded within *Harry Potter* while questions of identity are more explicitly dealt with.

Both series offer two examples of extreme old age and extreme physical and mental decline, up to the point of a complete absence of mind in the characters of the Authority and Bathilda Bagshot. Both characters are a hyperbole to what has been termed the fourth age (Gilleard and Higgs, ‘Abjection’ 135), a time of “personal dependency and ‘massification’ of misery that is thought to dominate the institutional settings of long-term care” (ibid.), in which age becomes a horrific state that sees an orphaned and decaying body (cf. Gillerard and Higgs 138). Both characters are less a conscious being but rather empty shells, demented and blind, having lost all self-control. In both cases age becomes a stage without agency, a state in which the individual fails to sustain “the distinction between oneself as subject and oneself as object” (ibid.), as subjectivity implies the awareness of oneself and one’s own corporeal boundaries. As the Authority and Bagshot have no mind of their own, they are unable to see themselves as subjects any longer. Thus, age acquires an abject notion which is further underlined by the places they inhabit as Bagshot’s home is squalid, smells and is extremely dirty, whereas the Authority’s crystal litter is tilted and “stained and smeared with mud and [...] blood” (Pullman, AS 171). Reduced from their former, notable positions to wrinkled, half blind, feeble and mindless shells of their former selves, their surroundings do not only show disorder and a loss of self-control, but moreover a carelessness by others as both characters are left to their own devices (cf. Pullman, AS 171-172; Rowling, *Hallows* 335). As “allocation of space to the elderly at once indicates their place in the community and instructs [one] as to the overall structure of society and the nature of social relationships prevailing

within it" (Hazan 14), it seems as if the society surrounding Bagshot and the Authority, both of which have been pushed into a liminal social and spatial position by others, does view old age, or at least the fourth age, in largely negative terms, especially if sickness and senility, as well as a loss of self-control are intertwined with age. In both cases, the elderly characters "are no longer referred to in terms of social identities, rather it is the very absence of other imputed and acceptable identities that generates the concept of the old person as sick and in need of medical care" (Hazan 15). Yet, the encroaching loss of memories as well as the absence of a will of their own has different causes. While the Authority is demented and "[has]no will of his own" (cf. Pullman, AS 165, 172), because of his isolated position and his age, Bagshot, although it is hinted that her memory might not be up to par, lacks both as she has been dominated and controlled by Voldemort's snake Nagini (Rowling, *Hallows* 339). As the two characters are reduced to something less than a subject by their uncontrollable stigmata of ageing, both of them are compared to children and animals, and are described as hapless, non-autonomous and vulnerable beings who are subjected to the goodwill and power of others. However, their respective deaths vary. While the Authority dies with "a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief" (Pullman, AS 172), Bagshot's body simply collapses, as she had "died several months ago [...] her body show[ing] unmistakable signs of injuries inflicted by Dark Magic" (Rowling, *Hallows* 439-440) as her body had been inhabited by one of the Dark Lord's Horcruxes.

Concerning death, both series offer a different outlook, yet, confirm the connection between thanatology and gerontology in which age is seen as the inevitable precursor to death. As people normally strive for survival, one theory proposes that the liminal space between life and death which the old occupy might lead to their marginalisation because they are the visible reminders of everyone's mortality, the latter of which adults would preferably push away for as long as possible (cf. Greenberg et al. 34). Whereas *His Dark Materials* broadens this view by proposing that death is always around the corner, a stable and unavoidable part of life which is inescapable, individual and not necessarily threatening, the close connection between older characters and their particular deaths is still described as it is the grandmother's death who is as close as he can be by resting underneath her blanket, while the deaths of younger characters usually hide away or are able to separate from their individuals. This awareness of impending death is, however, the main distinguishing feature between elderly characters and younger characters. In comparison, *Harry Potter* proposes a twofold approach to death. On the one hand death, as by Dumbledore, Flamel and Harry, can be embraced, seen as an adventure (cf. Rowling, *Stone* 243) and met as an old friend (cf. Rowling, *Beedle the Bard* 95). Yet, death is explicitly linked to older characters. The death of elderly characters is seen as more natural and processable, as well as able to be disregarded, than the death of adolescents and adults, seen as far more scaring and painful (cf. Rowling, *Goblet* 671-673; *Order* 14-15, 844, 858-859; *Prince* 32). Thus, Bagshot's death is only mentioned in passing and while Dumbledore's death is a blow for the Order of the Phoenix and Harry, the latter one does never suffer from nightmares replaying the headmaster's death, which is in direct contrast to the haunting dreams he retains of the deaths of Cedric and Sirius (cf. Rowling, *Order* 14-15 *Hallows* 14-15). On the other hand, age and death are sought to be covered, halted and avoided. While

*His Dark Materials* proposes no masquerade, no covering of the effects of ageing, all the while showing that age can be a mask for a younger self, *Harry Potter* provides one character in which the attempts of technologies of the self are taken to an extreme. Voldemort, by splitting his soul and anchoring him seemingly irrevocably to mortal life and by changing his exterior to the extent that no biological processes can be observed, shows the scope of the possibilities of “active concealment of signs of old age” (Jones and Higgs 1517) as well as immortality. Yet, by the insistence on the unnatural and evil nature of these processes, and by his animal-like exterior which covers and mirrors an emotionally stunted and faulty personhood beneath, the parodist nature of such a masquerade, which enacts valuable, youthful standards, shows simultaneously the problematic nature of this form of covering, moreover, revealing what needs to be concealed. Thus, Voldemort rebels against the biological and cultural nature of age, the concept itself and age as a threshold to death by performing an idealised, younger self in which he believes at the same time being utterly detached from biological processes of ageing; a performance which may become inflexible and inhibiting if it is performed the same way in all changing spacio-temporal contexts, thus, betraying its inherent unnaturalness. In direct contrast, Dumbledore neither covers, avoids nor fears death. Instead his rebellion against the general attitudes towards ageing as physical and mental decline take the form of mimicry as he conforms to the social norms around him, while consciously subverting the discourse by which these regulations are constructed. Thus, he uses his position as a wise old man who is eccentric and possesses questionable sanity to reproach others and state and act on his own perceptions without being ousted from the society in which he lives.

Apart from contrasting Dumbledore and Voldemort in terms of their relationship to ageing and by extent death, therefore contrasting two acts of rebellion against notions of ageing, namely successful ageing, in which elderly characters reject the notion of age being performative and may retain “the same feelings and the same requirements as the young [without] the world look[ing] upon [the old] with disgust” (de Beauvoir 3), and unsuccessful ageing, in which technologies of the self need to be employed to cover the realities of ageing which is seen as a natural, performative act, the series does provide comparatively few new departures as successful ageing can also be seen as a “patronising instruction of aged persons for better and fuller lives” (Hazan 15). Thus, *Harry Potter* offers a powerful politician and teacher whose health can be attributed to an extended lifespan supported by magic, and whose age, although noticeable, does not lead to his exclusion because he is one of the centrepieces of the society by holding numerous prestigious positions. Even if Dumbledore, by exposure to the hero of the series, moves on from a generic image of a wise old man, and even if he offers the possibility of subverting the general discourse which constructs his position, his position seems unattainable as it is his affluence and his power that influence the social roles available to him, thus supporting and reinforcing prevailing social conditions of segregation, ambiguity, and alienation (cf. Hazan 44). The other roles offered, those of teachers, politicians and scholars, also seem restricted to a certain audience. *His Dark Materials*, at first, seems to move on from generic positions, and offers beings in which age does not matter. Angels and witches, who are old but simultaneously somewhat ageless,

play with the question whether age truly needs to be expressed in physical decline and whether age is more of a concept constructed by the eyes of the beholder, which in turn echoes the point made by de Beauvoir or Guellette that age is something biological but moreover something culturally constructed. In this approach, the body is more of a cultural text than a material, fixed entity “reflecting and giving material expression to the cultural values, preoccupations and anxieties in a specific culture” (Benson 128) and is constructed through the eyes of the beholder by an interaction process between the ideas and perceptions of the onlooker and its materiality. Yet, the attainability or possibility of such an ageless body and mind, or of an in tandem ageing body and self, is questioned simultaneously as angels are heavenly beings, their position, while possible, is rarely attained, and witches possess magic, possibly influencing their ageing and which is similarly impossible to attain for others. Moreover, the construction of the angels, as young, human-like beings, shows two of the main points of contention of both series’ attitudes towards the ageing process, namely that the body remains the crisis point for ageing (cf. Estes et al. 37), as well as that perceptions of age and the ageing body are often produced by onlookers and, by extent, the gaze of youth.

*His Dark Materials* and *Harry Potter* use simplified and often static types of older characters. In presenting the archetypes of the wise old man, the gatekeeper and the ageing academic, the latter of which retains similar elements in both series, who are keepers and storehouses of knowledge, teaching, transmitting, memorising and cultivating, and sometimes embodying, parts of cultural and communicative memory, as for instance, Dumbledore keeps up traditions within Hogwarts, knowing their scripts and regulations and possibly handing these over to his successor, while Ollivander stores not only specific knowledge but ritualises the entry and initiation into the Wizarding world. Moreover, some of the scholars or wise old men are blinded by the sheer accumulation of knowledge, being unable to see the bigger picture and, thus, being detached from the world in which they live. The scholars and historians in the series are sometimes developing “slowly into [...] historical figure[s] who might still be important but [are] no longer in contact with timely issues” (Guggenbühl-Craig 1013), a notion vividly expressed in the character of Binns, Bagshot, and to a certain extent, the scholars of Jordan and Paradisi. While the connection of knowledge or wisdom and old age is not unheard of, it is the focus on social positions and the interaction between the old and the younger which prescribes whether a person is wise and thus valued or knowledgeable, detached and, thus, scorned. Most of the elderly characters of both series occupy comparatively high offices, such as: headmaster or Master (Dumbledore, Master of Jordan College), teacher (Binns, Dumbledore, scholars), politician(s) (Dumbledore, Scrimgeour, Voldemort, Farder Coram, Iorek Byrnison), advisors to kings and those in command (Farder Coram, Dumbledore), second-in-command or leaders (Dumbledore, Scrimgeour, Voldemort, Farder Coram, John Faa, Master of Jordan College, Serafina Pekkala, Authority, Sattamax, Grandfather). Their respect, thus, is founded not only on their wisdom or the veneration by their people but also on the social rank they occupy. Moreover, these ranks ensure their continuing employment, a fact that both series propose and underline. The engagement in meaningful activities and interaction, the abandonment of “stereotype-perpetuating environments for older persons which

foster dependence” and the promotion of “intergroup cooperation [that] builds trust” (Fiske and Cuddy xxi, 16) eventually leads to the undermining of stereotyping toward out-group members. Yet, there is an interdependence between the societal structure and the function of the old. The more modern and widespread the society becomes, with improved health care, being technologically advanced and urbanised, the more are the older figures ridiculed, problematised and devalued (cf. Fiske and Cuddy 13). Thus, in the more primitive and less industrialised cultures, as well as in those in which family ties have not collapsed, such as the Gyptians, the elders have a high standing as advisors and transmitters of cultural knowledge and wisdom. This contrast is explored in *His Dark Materials* which proposes primitive, illiterate cultures living in close proximity to each other and in small communities (cliff-ghasts, Mulefa), more industrialised cultures (panserbjørne) with clear ranks and social positions and more urbanised and widespread and highly modernised cultures (Lyra’s and Will’s worlds). In these societies the attitudes towards the old range from veneration and respect (Mulefa), to respect of their position (panserbjørne, Gyptians) to derision and scorn (Lyra’s Oxford). In contrast, *Harry Potter*, as mentioned above, only proposes one culture which is less industrialised and in which family ties are immensely important, and where urbanisation is, as there are few magical towns and few wizards living in the Muggle world, less widespread. Thus, the older characters are quite often not only in high positions but also respected. Respect as a dual pathway of social interaction, in this case, is important “both in regulating group dynamics and in influencing personal well-being” (Huo and Binning 1570) as it ensures that recognition is extended (cf. Sennett, *Respect* npg.). Therefore, respect ensures that older characters are seen and recognised which is important to the construction of group and individual identity (cf. Mendietas 3), either in order to compare one’s group to another or in order to provide “us with attitudes and structures to think and to express ourselves” (Mead 36) as “unity depends on something outside itself” (Woodward, *Identity and Difference* 45). Yet, respect is in short supply (cf. Sennett 3). Thus, the fact that it is “withheld and doled out sparingly highlights its significance in social relationships” (Huo and Binning 1570). Respect, moreover, “satisfies two core motives of social life – the striving for status (recognition as a worthy contributor to the group) and the need to belong (formation of meaningful, affiliative bonds with other group members)” (ibid.). This points to the fact that if elderly characters are respected, echoing the dictum of respecting one’s elders, they are less marginalised because of their continuing position within the society. If this respect is, moreover, given because the person simultaneously occupies a high rank within that society which depends on verbal deference or gestures, the evaluation of the person as well as their rank reinforce each other, ensuring continuing respect, status and belonging because of this intertwinement. Yet, respect can function detached from social ranks or positions (cf. Sennett 53), but is still attached to skills, abilities and character traits (cf. Sennett 63) and needs to be performed in words and gestures and can be ritualised. Thus, Dumbledore, a man who occupies prestigious, high status positions within the Wizarding society receives respect not only in terms of his position but additionally because he is an exceptional and powerful wizard who possesses a unique set of abilities. In his case, both sources of respect inform, influence and reinforce each other. For instance, Farder Coram’s, Iorek Byrnison’s and Sattamax’

source of respect is reliant on the intertwinement between status and abilities. In all three cases their abilities as guiding, advising and protecting figures who serve as storehouses of knowledge are connected to and legitimise their positions. In comparison, the scholars of Jordan receive respect because of their positions within the university as well as their knowledge, while respect stemming from skills, abilities or character traits is not attributed. When it comes to ageing, respect is rarely given genuinely but by a notion that elders must be respected by custom, thus, while respect is ritualised and performed, seemingly ensuring the status within the in-group, the lack of belief in this performance may turn it into mockery, which in turn marginalises and separates elders from the in-group of the younger members of society. In *His Dark Materials*, while the scholars are in high positions, connected to authority and seemingly respected, their description shows that respect is rarely genuine as they are viewed with derision and shown as lacking vision. Respect, in this case, ensures their status, but prevents them from belonging to an in-group outside of the in-group of the scholars. In contrast, as mentioned, Albus Dumbledore, Sattamax, Ollivander and Scrimgeour are respected because of their abilities, skills, knowledge and character as well as their offices, leading to respect being given to their social status, their position as a worthy contributor to their society as well as their characters. As all of them, by being an integral part of their community, are able to form “meaningful, affiliative bonds with other group members” (Huo and Binning 1572), in which respect runs both ways, they are neither marginalised nor exempt from their society. It is this bidirectional respect, which some of the characters receive, which enables them to carve a niche for themselves and to construct different individual performances than those which are provided by generic images and roles. For instance, as Dumbledore is widely and internationally respected, his eccentricities and his behaviour as a ‘fool’ in the widest sense are part and parcel of him and are, while not always looked upon favourably, accepted because they are, in the end, overridden by his abilities and skills. It can, therefore, be argued that both series propose the notion of bidirectional respect in order to dispose of negative roles and notions for as well as attitudes to elderly people. Yet, this argument, while a valuable departure, runs into a few problems. Most importantly, that these positive notions of ageing seem to be connected to social positions and focussed on particular roles within society, which are able “to project a future which transcends the prospects of immediate utility” (Heinämaa 182) and in which people can comfortably age, namely “individuals engaged in highly intellectual or spiritual activities [such as] scientist, philosopher, writer, artist, politician” (ibid.). While respect is all-inclusive, its close connection to status, rank and authority, which these positions imply, makes it a less suitable proposition for the better part of society, as it excludes those at the margins, those without occupation, the poor, the less intellectual and the sick, who might find it hard to regain status and belonging simply through the notion of respect, which in their case, is often in short supply.

## 4 CONCLUSION

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Literature, by taking in notions prevalent in society and then transmitting these renegotiated structures, is able to provide a society with images with which to think and to express oneself. Still, *Harry Potter* and *His Dark Materials*, while they do transmit new perspectives, should be regarded with a grain of salt. Not only do both series, in large parts, confer to the pervasive notion of age, which as a social construct has “biological, psychological and sociological aspects” (Hazan 45), in biomedical terms by focusing on the body, but they, furthermore, perpetuate the notion of physical and mental decline which seemingly goes hand in hand with it. Yet, while most of the descriptions of old age are negative in physical, but often positive in mental terms, both series also provide the reader with true nightmares of old age in which the mind seemingly abandons the wreckage which biological processes have wrought upon the body. Both series do provide few role-models for old age, as the older characters seem to be overladen with negative and disabling physical and mental stigmata, such as madness, physical deformities like hunchbacks or disabling illnesses as shown in Farder Coram’s case, physical decrepitude bordering on the abject, and virtual and figurative blindness and detachment from their surroundings. Additionally, and similarly unfavourable, *His Dark Materials* also provides ideal conditions for the construction of subject positions by providing roles with a magical or transcendental character in which the aged body is negotiable and the being remains somewhat ageless. Moreover, what has been notable, especially within the *Harry Potter* series, is the derogatory usage of the word ‘old’. Thus, ‘old’ is either used to cement a social hierarchy or in-group liking, for instance as Ludo Bagman refers to Arthur Weasley as “old man” (Rowling, *Goblet* 87) and an “old chap” (ibid.), or it is used to display poor manners, unlikeable characters like Rita Skeeter, who is referred to as “old Rita” (Rowling, *Goblet* 152) or “that old cow” (Rowling, *Goblet* 610) and Fleur Delacour is termed as “old Fleur Delacour” (Rowling, *Order* 70), or it is used to legitimise derogatory behaviour towards others. Thus Bertha Jorkins, who is “poor old Bertha” (Rowling, *Goblet* 89, 153) or Snape who is “old Snape” (Rowling, *Order* 69), are usually treated with derision. As these characters are by no means old in a chronological or physical sense, old is used as pejorative term referring rather to the moral character, likeability and lower social position of the person than to their chronological or biological age. In terms of old age, again within the *Harry Potter* series, older characters often attain an animal-like nature, both physically and mentally, as Binns is referred to as a “wrinkled old tortoise” (Rowling, *Chamber* 150), Mrs. Figg as a “mad old bat” (Rowling, *Order* 23) and Muriel as a “bad-tempered flamingo”

(Rowling, *Hallows* 141). These comparisons only feature in the description of older characters and seek to dehumanise and objectify them, showing that old age is connected to instincts, an absence of will and mind and the submission to other people's power, all of which legitimises an absence or presence of care. This is in sharp contrast to *His Dark Materials* which does neither generally refer to younger characters as "old" and thus, unlikeable or lower in the social hierarchy, nor does it compare older characters with animals that are slow, blind or equipped with less intelligence. Concerning most attitudes towards the concept of age, both series, while *Harry Potter* more so than *His Dark Materials*, remain firmly rooted in ageist notions as the younger in-group looks down upon the aged, by using negative images of ageing ageist behaviours as shown in Bagshot's case, and ageist language by using attributions such as codger, old fool, mad fool and the aforementioned implications deriving from a comparison with animals or children (cf. Hazan 28; Nuessel in Montepare and Zebrowitz 335).

Yet, *Harry Potter* does not only provide a role which is, apart from its inherent wisdom, much more relatable and functional, but also an approach to a function of old age which might be fruitful. It is the role of the old fool and the absence of a subjugation to generic and static roles, which seems most suited to the real life conditions people encounter. This is embodied in Albus Dumbledore who might be wise and unattainable on the one hand, but also foolish on the other hand, rendering him a humanised character with his own fears, desires, dreams and emotions. Even if the reader, following Harry's footsteps, learns of the human side to the headmaster comparatively late, the fact that Dumbledore has been shaped by his past, has made mistakes and is not infallible is, although harrowing for Harry and the Order, reassuring for the reader. It clearly shows that age is a part of a fluid concept of life and self in which age is not a threshold for the abandonment of all human nature and drives<sup>26</sup>. In the headmaster, "the perceived mental and physical deficiencies of older adults [are not attributed] to some personal weakness" (Fiske and Cuddy 16) but to the ageing process itself, such as senility and his perceived loss of power. Yet, the ageing process does not seem to have robbed him of many capabilities as the presence of his physical and magical strength show. Moreover, both series show that age, although it involves an accumulation of visible stigmata, does not necessarily have to be a "place from which there is no escape, nowhere to go but death" (Gilleard and Higgs, 'Abjection' 138), but a time during which older adults may take up new and different social roles and in which employment and meaningful activities are possible and, to a certain extent, necessary as the series never show older character outside of some form of meaningful activity. Even if the cultures which value their elders, are less like the realities found outside the fantastical, the notion of bidirectional respect as well as the close connection of older and younger adults outside of the family unit, might prove to be adaptable and a good point of departure. In this capacity, teaching, the transmission and acquisition of knowledge are shown to be not only the most often used tropes, but also positions

<sup>26</sup> However, it needs to be noted, that questions of sexuality or a love life, as opposed to e. g. love, romance and friendship, are never addressed in any form within the original *Harry Potter* series – or in *His Dark Materials* for that matter –, leading to a desexualisation of older characters. These notions are only touched upon in the complimentary books and only in connection with a limited set of characters, most notable ones being Albus Dumbledore and Minerva McGonnagal.

in which age, in its connection to experience, is seen most vividly as progress and as a valuable trait. In addition, *Harry Potter* shows that the biomedical and general stereotypes can be resisted and undermined by unique connections of subject positions deriving from different discourses as well as by performing hyperbolic versions of prefabricated roles of ageing, which enables, for instance, Griselda Marchbanks as well as Dumbledore to show that the implications of ineptitude are constructed and cannot be applied across the board. Both characters, thus, use their age and their prescribed roles to defy common stereotypes of ageing by mimicking them, revealing their unnaturalness and the social constructedness. By providing characters whose strength and energy belie their aged exterior, or by constructing characters who consciously deconstruct and subvert common discourses of ageing, both series underpin that ageing is not an inevitable decline of strength and power, both mentally and physically, but a concept involving “basic sets of decline” (Montepare and Zebrowitz 338) and social concepts, that is nevertheless fluid and open to reconstruction

As the question whether a general change in attitudes towards older people during the eighties and nineties, from biomedical to social constructivist discourses and from thoroughly ageist attitudes to less harmful attitudes, can be detected within novels written during or after that time has been one of the driving forces of this thesis, the answer to it is just as ambivalent as the concept of ageing itself: in a way yes, and yet, no. Both series, as shown in the previous chapters, are firmly rooted in the biomedical discourse, thus perpetuating the most prevalent discourse in society. As age, however, can be seen as a discursive formation, it appears more like a jigsaw puzzle of multiple discourses flowing into each other, intertwining and existing separately. Within this formation, both series above do start to break up notions of stability and inevitability, rigid age boundaries and strict codes of behaviour and expression, therefore, they can be seen as departures providing new and different perspectives. A more noticeable change of attitudes, however, can be seen throughout the *Harry Potter* novels, which span a time of ten years. In the earlier novels, older characters are largely absent, the series focussing more on middle-aged and young characters. Yet, as these young characters mature along with the topics touched upon in the novels, more and more older characters are introduced, such as Moody, various Ministry employees, the WEA, Slughorn, Aberforth Dumbledore, Bathilda Bagshot, Muriel, Augusta Longbottom and others, some of which move from the periphery of the story more into focus. Moreover, Albus Dumbledore, with each year, becomes less super-human and more multifarious as a character as he moves on from the Merlin-like guide, usually appearing at the beginning, the middle and the end of the novel, to being more and more involved in Harry's school activities. In comparison, as *His Dark Materials* spans only five years, from 1995 to 2000, the changes in attitude are not as vivid. Yet, within the series, as proposed above, various forms of living together are dissected and evaluated without providing a final verdict – quite in contrast to the value charged binaries of the *Potter* series – but ending in the proposition that there are always alternatives available which are sometimes more and sometimes less applicable but are still worth exploring. Within both series, older characters play vital roles (e. g. Farder Coram and Albus Dumbledore), their appearance is fully described, their occupation is defined, they are often independent even in older age, they are from outside the family unit and

they engage in various activities and are not reduced to one specific position or role. Yet, this does not apply to all older characters. The Authority, Bagshot and most of the minor characters can be exempt from this list as their characters are not quite rounded, their personalities not fully developed and they are not always fully independent (cf. McGuire 206). Thence, both series propose a departure from general approaches to age in young adult literature, which mostly sees older characters as invisible, in minor roles, using them “as conduits for comic relief, exploiting stereotypes of physical, cognitive and sexual ineffectiveness” (Cuddy and Fiske 3), and shed a new perspective on age in general. Yet, problematising the latter point, the proposed difference between performativity and performance is sometimes difficult to discern, because, although older characters have taken up important roles, they often remain too superficial in order to fully determine whether the characters perform age consciously or take up an already existing script. In addition, women still do feature to a lesser extent and are more likely to be described as subjected to a steep physical decline, as batty, grandmotherly or somehow bird like – a contrast which has not been explored in too much detail in this thesis, but which might prove fruitful for later analysis. However, within both series, characters are able to defy and transcend negative stereotypes of ageing, defying notions of the naturalness, as behind their agedness a strict sense of right and wrong, a surprising strength, and a predilection to use their age to their advantage is detectable. Still, those characters are rooted in a certain social milieu, thus, those without occupation, the poor, the less intellectual and the less affluent are neither mentioned nor are alternatives offered. Therefore, the potential inherent in fantasy literature to provide “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’ 48), which may be used as a space for play, is not fully utilised.

What both series show is that

the experience of old age is dependent in large part upon how others read to the aged; that is the social context and cultural meanings are important. Meanings are crucial in influencing how growing old is experienced by the ageing in any given society; these meanings are shaped through interaction of the aged with the individuals, organisations, and institutions that compromise the social context. Social context, however, incorporated not only situational events and interactional opportunities but also structural constraints that limit the range of possible interaction and the degree of understanding, reinforcing certain lines of action while barring others (Estes et al. 18).

By showing older characters as mostly engaged, as opposed to disengaged, with society, their advantages such as foresight, as opposed to short-sightedness and stubbornness, their experiences as opposed to the inexperience of others, their ability to see beyond the obvious as opposed to the unwillingness of others to see are contrasted. Yet, the series focus on two more or less marginalised groups, namely that of the adolescents, which are unfinished adults, and that of the elderly characters which are, by the middle-aged, seen as already at the end of their lives. Nevertheless, both groups aspire to the valuable status of the middle-aged. Thus, a twofold contrast is constructed. While, in comparison to middle-age, most elderly characters might show activeness, foresight, decisiveness, insight and knowledge, as opposed to inactivity, passivity, indecisiveness, in contrast to the adolescents, who are the ones

on a quest to defeat the evil forces, they seem more passive, manipulative, trustworthy and firmly positioned in advisory roles. Thus, each series proposes three separate in-groups, the young, the adults and the old, a tripartition in which the in-group of the adolescents is described much more favourably, creating a positive distinctiveness by using auto-stereotypes, contrasted with the perceived out-group of the middle-aged, to which they aspire and share a social understanding with, but which is also exaggerated, homogenised and described in less positive terms. Both groups do, to a certain extent, view the old as an out-group, both because of their similar values of youth and activity as well as because of an in-group bias, which favours members of their own age group, and an out-group bias, which sees the devaluation of other age groups. Reiterated in these group distinctions is, however, the notion of difference, which has been summarised by the Royal Commission on Population:

Older people excel in experience, patience, wisdom and breadth of view; the young are noted for energy, enterprise, enthusiasm, the capacity to learn new things, to adapt themselves, to innovate. It thus seems possible that a society in which the proportion of young people is diminishing will become dangerously unprogressive (Blaikie 39).

Thus, while older adults are seen as necessary to the advancement of the young, the latter's values, their strengths, and their progress is still far more necessary in order to defeat evil forces and in order to build a new world afterwards which does focus on new outlooks on life and is not deeply rooted in tradition.

Trying to define, or grasp age, old age and ageing is difficult and ambivalent, but necessary. Turney notes that in former times

[a]lmost everyone used to work until they dropped. Now, just as life expectancy rises, we are moving people out of work earlier. How will we understand the shape of a life if paid employment takes up 35-odd years out of, say, 95? What are all these people going to do? We have hardly begun to address this question (Turney, 'The Age of the Oldie' sec.8)

It is in this regard, age has acquired more and more importance and new departures of ageing are needed. As children learn stereotypes about ageing very early, because "age is a fundamental dimension along which children organise their perceptions of people in their social world" (Montepare and Zebrowitz 77), mass media, literature, social media or television, targeting children and young adults occupies a central role in the creation of perceptions of old age. Yet, literature, in this respect, has its limits. In a culture which is, as can be seen in the concentration on body images as well as physical descriptions of characters, "obsessed [with images]" (Warren and Richards 152), "words don't convey the same depth of meaning as an image [does]. It's what we all think in. We all think in pictures. Pictures are our default mechanism. We are bombarded with certain images through the press and it becomes the norm" (ibid.). Therefore, it might be images, in conference with literature, which are needed to reverse the negative image of ageing that seems pervasive in society. Yet, both are able to provide the aged and those who will one day be aged with various options and roles which can be negated, negotiated and evaluated. As identities depend on an interplay of fixedness and fluidity, these roles, or these subject positions, should not be closed and static but should provide the aged with the freedom of choice and

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multiple alternatives, instead of forcing them to seemingly abandon their former lives, stagnating, disengaging and being reduced to bodily signs of an undesirable progress. Whereas Guggenbühl-Craig demanded that the old should be allowed to be fools, the demand in constructing “the brave new world of the old” (Turney sec.9) should be to have more choices, more blurred edges, more windows into other dimensions. After all, it is the choices, which “show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Rowling, *Chamber* 333).

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# Statement of Authorship

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Ich versichere, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Ich reiche sie erstmals als Prüfungsleistung ein. Mir ist bekannt, dass ein Betrugsversuch mit der Note „nicht ausreichend“ (5,0) geahndet wird und im Wiederholungsfall zum Ausschluss von der Erbringung weiterer Prüfungsleistungen führen kann.

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