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“A silence of three parts”: connecting identity,
narratology, and high dark fantasy in *The Kingkiller
Chronicle’s* storywold

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Facultad de Humanidades

“A SILENCE OF THREE PARTS”:
CONNECTING IDENTITY, NARRATOLOGY, AND
HIGH DARK FANTASY IN *THE KINGKILLER
CHRONICLE*’S STORYWORLD

Programa de Doctorado en Estudios
Interdisciplinarios de Género

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Declaración Honestidad Académica

El/la estudiante abajo firmante declara que la presente Tesis Doctoral es un trabajo original y que todo el material utilizado está citado siguiendo un estilo de citas y referencias reconocido y recogido en el apartado de bibliografía. Declara, igualmente, que ninguna parte de este trabajo ha sido presentado como parte de la evaluación de alguna asignatura del plan de estudios que cursa actualmente o haya cursado en el pasado.

El/la estudiante es consciente de la normativa de evaluación de la Universidad de Huelva en lo concerniente al plagio y de las consecuencias académicas que presentar un trabajo plagiado puede acarrear.

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Abstract

This dissertation will research *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld to argue that, within it, the notion of identity appears as a holistic combination of three elements: discourse, mindset, and embodiment. Furthermore, it will argue that identity is essential to better understand this narrative, especially in a setting like the one from the storyworld, which allows readers to delve into the narrative without prejudices. The thesis will explore, in its three sections, respectively, identity as a discourse, identity and mindset, and identity and embodiment, as well as the connection between each of them and narratology. Each section will cover different cultural productions within the storyworld, so the whole corpus is analyzed and explored within the most relevant section.

The first section will cover the two published novels of the, by June 2021, unfinished trilogy *The Kingkiller Chronicle* (*The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear*) to study how the narration of specific events vary depending on the identity of each character, as well as how identity is explored in connection to the chronotope in which characters live, and therefore the relationship between world-building and identity. The second section will cover Trauma and Identity, as well as alternate mindsets, by studying *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, a companion novella to the main trilogy, the *Chronicle*. Finally, the third section will cover the two short stories, "The Lightning Tree" and "How Old Holly Came to Be", and focus on how alternate embodiment is conveyed. In all three sections, this will be done by exploring both form and content and how these are intertwined.

What this dissertation aimed to suggest, that narrativity and identity are connected both ways through readers and their interpretations, and therefore through the tools that readers have to interpret narratological cues, such as reading tendencies and the establishment of empathic links between them and characters, can be, potentially, translated to other storyworlds, especially those from the

twenty-first century that focus on character development: By establishing the focus of the analysis on the reader's interpretation of the narrative voice, as well as on the connection between the narrative voice and the character's identity discourse, this dissertation allows for an exploration of the storyworld that focuses on how identity is conveyed, and on how identity affects narratology.

Resumen

Esta Tesis doctoral explorará en profundidad el *storyworld* de la *Crónica del asesino de reyes* para argumentar que el concepto identidad aparece como una combinación holística de tres elementos: discurso, mentalidad y *embodiment*¹. Además, defenderá que este concepto es esencial a la hora de entender mejor las narrativas, especialmente en un marco como el que existe en este *storyworld*, que permite a las lectoras sumergirse, sin prejuicios, en estas. La Tesis explorará, en sus tres secciones, respectivamente, la identidad como discurso, las relaciones entre identidad y mentalidad, y las que existen entre identidad y *embodiment*, así como la conexión entre cada una de esas aproximaciones y la narratología. Cada sección cubrirá diferentes productos culturales dentro del *storyworld* para que todo el corpus pueda ser explorado y analizado en la sección que resulte más conveniente.

La primera sección cubrirá la *Crónica del asesino de reyes*, esto es, las dos novelas publicadas hasta la fecha como parte de lo que, probablemente, será una trilogía: *El nombre del viento* y *El temor de un hombre sabio*. El objetivo es estudiar las maneras en las que la narración de determinados acontecimientos varía según la identidad de cada personaje, así como el modo en que la identidad se explora con relación al cronotopo en el que viven los personajes, y por tanto el enlace entre identidad y la construcción de mundos. La segunda sección abordará las relaciones entre trauma e identidad, así como las mentalidades alternativas, a través del estudio de *La música del silencio*, la novela corta que acompaña a la todavía inconclusa trilogía principal. Finalmente, la tercera sección se centrará en dos historias cortas, “El árbol del relámpago” y “Cómo el viejo acebo vino a mí”, con la intención de identificar los procedimientos a través de los cuales el *embodiment* alternativo se

¹ Se ha decidido mantener los términos *storyworld* y *embodiment* en inglés por la inexistencia de conceptos absolutamente equivalentes en castellano: proponer una traducción aproximada, no consensuada académicamente, podría resultar contraproducente al desviarse del modo en que ambos términos han sido definidos por la escuela analítica que los utiliza y, probablemente, generar ambigüedades que se procuran evitar en el desarrollo del cuerpo del trabajo.

verbaliza. En las tres secciones se procurará una exploración tanto de forma como de contenido, atendiendo de manera especial al modo en el que ambas dimensiones de la escritura se interconectan.

Esta Tesis intenta defender que la narratividad y la identidad se relacionan a través de las lectoras, y por tanto, a través de las herramientas que estas tienen para interpretar las guías narratológicas, tales como la tendencia narrativa o el establecimiento de enlaces empáticos entre ellas y los personajes. Asimismo, propone que dicha hipótesis puede aplicarse en otros *storyworlds*, especialmente en aquellos producidos en el siglo XXI que priorizan el desarrollo de los personajes sobre otros aspectos. Al poner el foco del análisis en la interpretación que la lectora hace de la voz narrativa, así como en la conexión entre la voz narrativa y el discurso identitario de los personajes, esta investigación plantea una exploración del *storyworld* centrada en la forma en la que la identidad se verbaliza, y en cómo la identidad afecta a la narratología.

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Introduction

Dawn was coming. The Waystone Inn lay in silence, and it was a silence of three parts (Rothfuss, 2011a: 1).

The fact that fantasy literature is taking a prominent space within cultural production is, if not undeniable, at least worth discussing. Its capacity to transport readers to alternate worlds where magic can be possible has brought the attention of many, both critics and readers, in the last decades. At the same time, both for the academic and popular eye –if such a difference still applies–, there seems to be an increasing interest in how these worlds attempt to grasp the notion of identity, as well as understanding how they configure such a convoluted concept. Therefore, it seems reasonable to explore how identity appears in fantasy literary works. In places where everything is potentially possible, the question of how identity is built seems relevant, insofar as it reflects on the essentiality of each individual’s identity discourse and explores how it is either broken or reinforced. The notion of personhood, for instance, could be put into question when considering a world in which other sentient beings are capable of rational thinking and have their own identity discourse.

Similarly, the multiple capacities that certain beings possess alter how they perceive the world, and therefore their situation within their chronotope. In so doing, their identity discourse seems to be necessarily changed, insofar as their relationship with their environment fundamentally changes. However, there are not many studies that explore this connection between fantasy and identity in depth, or rather, it has not been given the academic prominence that the topic suggests. While it seems reasonable to think that a lot of fantasy works are more concerned with world-building and plot than with the idea of identity at an individual level, that does not exclude the fact that, in many of these works, certain elements induce readers to reflect upon identity issues, not only narratologically but also from a psychological and a cultural perspective, insofar as they establish a connection,

either by comparison or by contrast, between readers and characters, as well as their respective chronotopes.

In addition, many fantasy works primarily focus on character development. Hence identity, insofar as character development, requires an interest in how characters both appear and evolve, which requires a definition of both physical and psychological traits that make such an evolution patent. In that sense, the corpus explored here appears as extremely prolific in terms of identity, fantasy, and the narratological devices that are used to convey them. The five works that are under analysis here –two novels, *The Name of the Wind*, and *The Wise Man's Fear*; a novella, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*; and two short stories, “The Lightning Tree” and “How Old Holly Came to Be”– were all written by Patrick Rothfuss between 2007 and 2015 and brandished as fantasy literary works by publishing houses. These works belong to the same storyworld, but do not share the same narrative voice, which produces an interwoven set of narratives from at least four different perspectives that focus on four different characters. That amount of different perspectives and narrators suggests a deep concern with how each of these characters sees the world that surrounds them, how they see other characters, and, more importantly, how these characters see and identify themselves within their chronotope.

1. Objectives, structure, and methodology of the dissertation

This dissertation aims to explore the identity-building processes of characters within Patrick Rothfuss' storyworld and their relevance when interpreting the narratives there conveyed. As such, it will mainly focus on identifying such procedures, as well as how these appear in the books. This research, then, connects theories from a multidisciplinary framework, in which psychology, cognitive narratology, literary studies, trauma studies, and cultural studies, intertwine themselves to produce definitions of the key concepts applied here. Therefore, this dissertation aims to show that, within the storyworld, these

processes, and the notions that support the analysis (discourse, mindset, and embodiment being the three most prominent) are linked and influence each other. In other words, the storyworld, or at least all the narrations contained within, live through these concepts, as parts of a whole.

As such, this dissertation argues that this storyworld establishes a connection between narratology and identity in three different ways: first, that identity discourses are vital in conveying a narrative, second, that said discourse is affected by mindset, and third, that there is a connection between the shape of the discourse and embodiment. The relevance of this analysis comes from the multi-layered framework that this corpus builds, where all the fields mentioned above are integrated to make readers experience the different identitarian discourses of their characters not only through the content within the narrations but also in the form of the narrative discourse –if such a separation between content and structure exists–. This dissertation will also argue that identity, in this storyworld, appears in terms of discourse, mindset, and embodiment, the two latter traits that all characters from the storyworld have. In so doing, this dissertation also argues that this way of understanding narratives could apply to other fantasy literary works, provided they offer a similar framework, both in setting and type of narrative, to the one explored here.

This dissertation is a single, cohesive document that explores the thesis statement mentioned above throughout its pages. It required a full bibliographic review, as well as analysis of both the corpus and the theoretical background to ground its foundations firmly. Additionally, each chapter will include brief conclusions that will focus on the importance of each chapter in connection to the rest. Each section will also include a summary of what the part covers within its pages for clarity.

To have the dissertation updated to the most recent interpretations of the many notions and theories that appear (namely, Fantasy literature analysis, cognitive semiotics, cognitive narratology, trauma studies, embodiment studies, and

gender studies), it includes the most recent academic studies that could be found (especially those that review previous academic works), as well as non-academic, analytical explorations that have explored similar issues than the ones that appear in this dissertation (for instance, identity and identity-building processes), but from an alternate perspective. Many articles and references that appear in this dissertation are still ongoing researches that non-academic professionals are updating. These appear to integrate different aspects and enrich the exploration of these issues within this framework. Of course, this also implies that many of these studies have been carefully considered to be included in this research, and should be interpreted only insofar as this dissertation goes.

Being an interdisciplinary dissertation, as it is, this research must offer brief revisions of the main terms that appear here, and how these are integrated and understood to produce an argument. As such, each chapter will briefly cover the elements that will be applied within. Furthermore, instead of providing a complete state of the art at the beginning and then referring back to it, the arguments and the theoretical background will be exemplified within each chapter with sections of the story that is being covered in it, sometimes offering external examples that serve as contrasts or comparisons.

The selection of the corpus responds, primarily, to both the narrative framework and the storyworld's setting. As will be argued later, one of the main aspects of the narrative of the literary works contained in this storyworld is the focus on identity-building processes. While this is not exclusive of the selected corpus, the combination of this with a setting that does not have a clear referent to which readers can relate allows readers to focus on the identity-building processes. The main reason for this is that readers cannot know what to expect from the world with which they are presented. It would not be the same, for instance, that these stories were set in other storyworlds, such as Tolkien's Middle Earth (or others with a similar prominence), or a historical setting. Therefore their reading is, at least potentially, unprejudiced towards it. While there are several connections to different literary traditions that may tamper that lack of prejudices, readers do not know the

particular rules of the setting, and therefore are more prone to believe what the narrative tells about the storyworld.

This dissertation will be separated into three sections, where discourse, mindset, and embodiment, respectively, will be explored in terms of identity and narratology. These three keys will be metaphorically associated with the three keys that are needed to open Kvothe's, the main character, secret chest, to facilitate the reading and understanding of the dissertation as a whole:

“Your thrice-locked chest, Reshi?” Kvothe looked at his student, then laughter bubbled up out of him. “My what?” he asked incredulously. Bast blushed and looked down. “That’s just how I think of it,” he mumbled. “As names go...” Kvothe hesitated, a smile playing around his mouth. “Well, it’s a little storybook, don’t you think?” “You’re the one who made the thing, Reshi,” Bast said sullenly. “Three locks and fancy wood and all that. It’s not my fault if it sounds storybook.” Kvothe leaned forward and rested an apologetic hand on Bast’s knee. “It’s a fine name, Bast. Just caught me off my guard is all.” He leaned back again. “So. How would you attempt to plunder the thrice-locked chest of Kvothe the Bloodless?”. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 475)

In so doing, each section will cover a key –discourse, mindset, and embodiment–, as follows, as well as the parts of the corpus that better illustrate each key.

The first section will cover the first key, the one related to identity and discourse. As such, it will include the main theoretical background upon which this dissertation relies. Therefore, several necessary terms will be defined and analyzed, such as the narratological framework within which these narrations are set, or what will be understood here as identity, and how many categories of identity discourses exist, potentially. This section also includes a review and application of cognitive semiotics and narratology in terms of identity concerning the ways the narrative focuses on them to convey notions regarding the way identity discourses are built. The core novels, both *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man’s Fear* will be covered in this first section for an easier comprehension of what will be explored

there, since they are, from the whole corpus, the ones that present the reader with most examples of the connection between narratology and identity, being, as the core novels are, a retrospective account of Kvothe's story by himself.

The second section will delve into the notions of mindset and trauma, arguing for the connection between the former and identity, and the latter as a breaking (or rather shattering) point from identitarian discourses, being the focus of this section the novella *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, which focuses on Auri, a secondary character from the core novels. As this section will cover, the argument also conveys notions regarding the differences in book styles between the main trilogy and the novella. The latter will be here considered a narratological construct focused more on it being the snapshot of a particular character or event than on the development of an event or a character, which also affects how the novella conveys the framework. This, connected to identity, will argue that the novella is the book that is most concerned about describing its main character in synchronic terms, in contrast with the novels or the short stories.

Finally, the third section will cover the two short stories, "The Lightning Tree" and "How Old Holly Came to Be", to argue that embodiment is vital when constructing identities. Mainly because of how embodiment affects the way characters perceive internal elements within themselves, such as magic, or other capacities, and also because of how they see external factors, that is, how the other constructs an identitarian discourse about the other. Similar to what will be argued in the second section, in this case, the argument will suggest that the format of the short story is used here to convey the differences in embodiment that these characters have in contrast to the main character of the novels, Kvothe, and the one from the novella, Auri.

The reason why these sections cover different stories from the corpus is that doing so facilitates a comprehensive approach to the storyworld, as well as separating the many identitarian discourses that are present in Temerant among the main characters of the stories for analytical clarity. However, one should note that

what that appears in any section applies to the other two: considering each section sealed to the explorations of the other two would not offer a comprehensive approach to what the storyworld suggests in terms of identity. Instead, all that is explored in, for instance, section two regarding mindset applies to section one and section three. In short, the dissertation will analyze three keys, but it will use them in the same chest.

2. Key terms

As mentioned above, three key terms must be briefly reviewed before delving into the analysis of the storyworld. These three terms respond to the three elements that build an identity within the storyworld mentioned above. Furthermore, three additional notions that are not as relevant as the key terms but that help encapsulate the discussion within the storyworld (and within a literary work) will appear in this section. These are high dark fantasy, cognitive identity, and tendency.

Identity discourse will be considered here the idea of how identity is configured in words, in the shape of a story about oneself, as Zima points out (1-10). Identity discourse, moreover, responds to how different characters talk about themselves or others, especially, the narratives they produce and the narrations they tell. This key term will be especially relevant in the first section of the dissertation devoted to the two novels *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear* since these two novels suggest a deep concern with the way stories are told, as well as the truth behind them, as the dissertation will explore later. That is mainly because these are told both from an internal and an external perspective, as will be argued later.

Mindsets, as defined by Dweck, are “belief systems that give structure to our world and meaning to our experiences” (2000, Ch. 18). The development of the idea that Dweck also makes explicitly argues for the same sets of “belief systems” (Ch. 18). She argues that there is a clear connection between the sets that “portray

a more static self and world with inherent, fixed qualities” (Ch. 18) and “believing that your qualities are carved in stone—the fixed mindset” (2006, Ch. 1). Moreover, there is also a connection between the sets that “portray a dynamic self and a dynamic world” (2000, Ch. 18) and the “growth mindset [which] is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts” (2006, Ch. 1). This dissertation will base its notion of mindset on these ideas, as will be especially noted in its second section, which focuses on the novella *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*.

Finally, this dissertation will consider embodiment as “having, being in, or being associated with a body” (Smith, 2017: 1), and, following Jansen and Wehrle’s argument, as “an internal differentiation: I must be my body, and, at the same time, have this body” (38). In the section dedicated to this concept, the third one, there will be an exploration of the two characters whose embodiment is, arguably, the most alternate of all main characters’ embodiment, since their main characters are not . It is not only that each character has a different body, but also the relationship that they have with their environment, their body, their experiencing it, and the way they are regarded. That is the three elements mentioned above that Smith marks as embodiment (2017: 1), which are necessarily alternate from other embodiments. Moreover, the many embodiments that appear in the storyworld suggest that narratives within the storyworld are concerned with embodiment and its translation into discourse or narrative.

Although embodiment is part of the identity of a character, as implied above, it takes into account external elements that affect the relationship between a character and its body. Contrasting the embodiment theories of both Butler and Parisi, Nyman argues that, although for the former embodiment refers to the connection between body and decisions made explicit, such a claim must be nuanced by the latter’s consideration of the spatio-temporal framework limitations in which that body exists (81-82). As will be seen in the section devoted to embodiment, Bast and Holly, the main characters of the two short stories, base their perception of the world and the beings that surround them in terms of body

possibilities, such as the capacity of performing magic, or perceiving determined elements from the environment. This perception furthers the necessity of exploring embodiment as a category from which identity stems within the storyworld, as well as mindset.

Finally, it is essential to note that this distinction between mindset and embodiment is not the same as a distinction between mind and body. Barbour states that “embodied ways of knowing offer an alternative understanding of mind/body dualism, and of the knowledge/experience dualism” (234) in her book, where she expands from previous research. As such, the distinction between mindset and embodiment must be taken into account only from an analytical perspective. Furthermore, as the dissertation suggests, mindset and embodiment are more connected than what any “mind/body dualism” (234) may offer.

As advanced above, three other terms are relevant for this research, insofar as they connect and are specific for the Storyworld researched here, and for the investigation that appears in this dissertation. The first one is high dark fantasy, a term that can be used to define the setting of this storyworld. Briefly, it can be said that *Temerant* is a setting where elements from high fantasy and elements from dark fantasy interlope, establishing a kind of fiction where these two main subgenres are balanced. High dark fantasy, then, expresses this balance between elements from one and other subgenres, as will be deeply explored in the first section of this dissertation.

The second term, cognitive identity, responds to the literary approach that this dissertation takes on identity. It is a type of discourse that is concerned with the rationalization of the self, rather than anything else. In other words, the core discourse that a character regards as valid, regardless of any other identity discourse that may stem from it.

Finally, there is the concept of tendency. Tendency here will be considered as a collective, statistical interpretation of textual and metatextual elements, thus

requiring the reading community to interact to be accountable. Tendency, then, might be shaped by publishing strategies or readers' expectations. In other words, it will be considered here a conventional interpretation of narrative instances, thanks to which the reading is modified. The most successful tendency today, for example, is to understand that the narration of *The Kingkiller Chronicle* will explain everything that has not been revealed yet in the third book.

3. Summary of the Corpus

This dissertation will now provide an overview of the stories that constitute the corpus of novels, novella, and short stories set in Temerant, the Storyworld, to help readers of this dissertation approach the corpus and the contents that appear here. Furthermore, this dissertation will have mentions to either *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, the core novels, or the main trilogy, to collectively name the two novels mentioned above (as well as the third, unpublished one).

The Kingkiller Chronicle starts in the Waystone Inn, in Newarre, where Kote, the innkeeper, keeps a low-profile life (Rothfuss, 2008). Early in the narrative, however, readers start to understand that Kote has not always been an innkeeper. Instead, he seems to be Kvothe, an Edema Ruh, trouper, and adventurer similar to Taborlin the Great (a magnificent hero within the storyworld) in his feats, capable of performing magic and defeat all enemies in his way (2008). The story goes on and explores the truth that lies behind the mythical figure of Kvothe, since Devan Lochees, nicknamed Chronicler, is rescued by Kote and brought to the tavern (2008). The novel, then, starts a retrospective journey through Kvothe's life in his quest for vengeance for his parents' murder by the Chandrian, mythical evil anthropomorphic creatures, because his father had been investigating about them and singing songs about them (2008). To find more information about these creatures, and after overcoming his parents' loss, as well as spending some time in the city of Tarbean, he goes to the University, an institution where students practice

several disciplines. Among them, the most relevant for this dissertation are the ones that are more or less related to the supernatural, as will be seen later, these being sygaldry, sympathy, and naming, since, in this storyworld, knowing the true name of something gives the namer power over it (2008)². Once there, he finally finds some information regarding the Chandrian and a mass murder in a rural wedding, so he goes to investigate. On his way there, he discovers that the wife's father found an old pot that had the seven Chandrian painted, so they came and murdered anyone who saw it (2008). While Kvothe is telling this episode, a soldier enters in the Waystone Inn after being possessed by a demonic-like creature that Bast, Kvothe's assistant, calls a skin-dancer (2008). The creature is defeated, and *The Name of the Wind* ends with the night surrounding the inn in silence (2008).

The second book, *The Wise Man's Fear*, continues the story of Kvothe. After involuntarily calling the name of the wind against one of the students, Kvothe is suggested to abandon the University for some time. He then decides to go east, where he uses his bardic capacities so the ruler of Severen, one of the most prosperous cities, may court his bride-to-be (2011a). After his services as a bard are no longer needed, the ruler sends Kvothe away to find some bandits that are assaulting merchants in his domains. Kvothe then goes with three other mercenaries to hunt them down. After defeating most of them (and finding one of the Chandrian, although he realizes this later), he finds Felurian, a Fae creature that seduces him into traversing a portal to her realm (2011a). While staying there, Kvothe finds the Chtaeh, an evil tree capable of foreseeing the future, thanks to whom he acknowledges that the bandit's leader was one of the Chandrian (2011a). After that episode, he convinces Felurian to let him go, so he can finish a song for her that must remain unfinished until he is capable of comparing Felurian's love capacities with the ones of other people. He then meets back his fellow mercenaries and follows one of them, Tempi, to his motherland, where he learns about the Adem and their ways (2011a). Later, Kvothe goes back to Severen, but, on his way there, he

² For more on Storyworlds, see Stackelberg: n/p.

finds a group of fake troupers that he murders, and, after that, and being subject to racism by the ruler's new wife because of his origin as Edema Ruh, he goes back to the University (2011a). The narrative finishes similarly to how the first book ended, with Kvothe having to deal with external problems: in this case, Kvothe tries to fight two bandits but fails (2011a). After that, the book goes on to tell how Bast, Kvothe's apprentice, had them hired to have Kvothe beating them, but, since that did not happen, he murders them (2011a).

The Kingkiller Chronicle is not finished. There is still an upcoming book, *The Doors of Stone*, which, allegedly, will solve all the doubts that these two books have been implying so far (the first of them being, probably, who is the king that Kvothe kills to earn his nickname). However, this summary of events should be more than enough regarding the aims of this dissertation (that is, the identity-building processes that appear in the storyworld).

The third element of the corpus that will be covered here is *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. This novella is set below the University, where Auri, a former student of the institution that lives there, is awaiting the return of her friend Kvothe (2014a). As the novella states, the story revolves around the seven-day waiting time that Auri is enduring while trying to find three presents for Kvothe (2014a). There is not much that can be said about the novella in terms of plot, because of how novellas are built. The story, then, delves into Auri, exploring her way of seeing the world, her perception of herself, and her capacities as a powerful alchemist, all while trying to find a present for Kvothe in the Underthing, the place where she lives, a complex conglomerate of tunnels, ruins, and conduits (2014a).

Finally, two additional short stories are set within the storyworld. The first one is "The Lightning Tree", a story about Bast published in the *Rogues* short story collection, edited by G. R. R. Martin. Set in Newarre before the arrival of Chronicler, this story focuses on the relationship between Bast and the town (2015a). It is separated into three chapters that correspond to morning, afternoon, and evening, and revolves around an old tree where Bast trades with children,

solving their problems in exchange of sweets, flowers, favors, and information (2015a). There are two prominent children throughout the narration, Kostrel and Rike. While the former is welcome to the Lightning Tree and exchanges information with Bast, the latter is suggested to have broken the rules and is not invited any more (2015a). Nevertheless, Bast eventually agrees to help him one last time to have Rike's father disappear forever (2015a). This short story uses a similar structure to the one from the *Chronicle*, insofar as it presents two different settings: firstly, it offers the one where children have their problems solved, and secondly, the one where Bast interacts with the rest of the world, often giving some insights about how he addresses their issues.

The second one, "How Old Holly Came to Be", is different than that story. Published in the *Unfettered* short story collection, edited by Shawn Speakman, the story is set in an undetermined place within Temerant, where an old tree, Old Holly, observes a man and a lady starting to build a tower next to it (2013a: n/p). Time passes, and the man abandons the lady, who starts developing a relationship with the tree (n/p). Suddenly, some enemies try to overcome the tower, and Old Holly is made to bend for the Lady, whom it protects (n/p). After the encounter, the Lady tells Holly that she has to go, but that it should stay there (n/p). The tree agrees and stays there until the end of the tale (n/p). Not much can be said about the story in terms of plot due to its shortness (approximately 1,670 words), but, as it will be stated later, this story conveys almost as many identity-building elements than "The Lightning Tree".

4. Previous Literature

There is a vast amount of popular discussions regarding *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* storyworld, especially the main novels. Tor.com has an in-depth reading of the novels where Walton analyzes almost chapter by chapter drawing his conclusions (2011: n/p). YouTube, Reddit, Fandom Books Community, and Wikia

are also sources where readers may find speculation, analysis, and reviews of many elements from the storyworld. On the other hand, however, it seems that most academic investigations neglect these literary works, save a few exceptions, all reflecting on different elements that make the narratives within these literary works subversive, at least in the form these narratives take.

One of the few articles that can be found regarding *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear* is an article from 2014 by Stefanie Giebert's called "Boxes within boxes and a useless map: Spatial (and temporal) phenomena in the *Kingkiller Chronicles*", within which she explores how the narrative suggests that both space and time are problematic for readers to grasp a diachronic perspective of the story:

One aspect where readers expectations are repeatedly frustrated is topography. Although the books contain the world map typical of heroic fantasy (series), this turns out to be rather unhelpful ... First of all, we don't really know where we are, or rather, where Kvothe is – that is, we don't know where the frame narratives takes place. The Way-stone Inn is located in the village of Newarre. However, Newarre is not on the map. (108)

The fact that Newarre is not in the maps, however, responds to what she later states, that it is "nowhere" (109), a place where a narration starts, its location being unimportant. This lack of interest in the area where the story takes place seems to respond to a subversion of some tropes of fantasy where a world map often appears to help readers follow the narrative (108). If so, then, that subversion would suggest a narrative not focused on the same elements as other sorts of fantasy, but instead trying to focus on other points, such as, for instance, characters (108). This trait, the atopy of narrations, appears throughout the whole storyworld, with the lack of an established map of the Underthing where Auri lives, Bast's narration set in Newarre and Holly's narration set in an undetermined place.

Time is the other factor that Giebert's analysis focuses on, arguing that, although not unique, as she suggests (113), "time in the Fae does not pass more

slowly than time in the Four Corners, rather, it is the other way around ... for Kvothe seems to have aged a little more than would have been possible within three days” (113). Giebert here suggests that this is problematic for a diachronic analysis (and casual reading) of fantasy, but only because of the subversion that this change entails.

The article ends with the problem of the “Doors of Stone”, psychological tools through which a character overcomes trauma, as will be explored later:

It is to be assumed that connections between those metaphorical and the more or less physical doors of stone will be revealed in the third volume of the trilogy. Or possibly, they will not – as the books have set out to continually elude readers’ expectations, the final volume may continue to do so and leave the readers still disoriented, with an unsolved puzzle. (114)

With this, Giebert is implying that, then again, spatiology is being subverted by indicating that the narration will set them in an in-between place, psychology and physicality being at each side. Instead of being problematic, this argument reflects one of the issues that will appear in this dissertation, which is that, in the storyworld, everything revolves around the identity discourse of each character, composed by mindset and embodiment, and that these elements imply connections between beings and the place where they live, what surrounds them.

Sarah Playford has used *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* in two different publications in Academia.edu, branded as MA assignments, thus suggesting an increasing importance of these literary works for researchers new in the field. The first one is called *‘The Slow Regard of Silent Things’ and Free Indirect Style*. Within its pages, the article analyzes the application of free indirect style theories to Rothfuss’ novella and concludes by stating that the novella presents several deviations from common free indirect style, and therefore is not paradigmatic. Moreover, what Playford argues is that there may be “three potential voices, all speaking together” (2015a: 7) in some sections of the story. The novella thus presents a series of linguistic elements into which this research will delve later, but

that this publication briefly explores: the importance of the way the novella is written to convey meaning. For Playford, this suggests that the novella is “tinged with madness” (7). In this dissertation, however, madness, a term that is subject to debate, will be explored from a different perspective, where Auri is seen as mad because of the surrounding normalized setting, and thus, would be part of what will be called here alternate mindset.

The second publication by Playford that focuses on this novella is called *Object-friends; Linguistic personification in The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. Here, Playford explores how Auri perceives different items as being alive from a linguistic perspective. For instance, she argues that the use of personal pronouns suggest that Auri personifies these items. However, at the same time, she argues that there are several examples in English where items are assigned a gender, “such as ships always being female” (2015b: 5). The publication ends by posing a question in which narratology and linguistics are connected: “the reader must decide whether the personification is presented independent of the mind within the text or through it; if it is presented through the character’s mind, can it truly be personification if she does not assign the agency?” (7). This question is relevant to the interests of this dissertation. In short, it poses the question of narrative agency of fictional characters: if understanding that a character is personifying items depends on assuming that Auri is reliable in her telling, the question then is to what extent personification is a valid category to define what Auri is expressing, or, instead, to what extent the narrative voice is embodied within Auri, rather than expressing itself as another intradiegetic character. In Playford’s publication, the answer that appears is that it is up to the reader to decide whether this may fall into the category of personification or not (7). The argument, of course, would require further analysis, but Playford’s approximation, although brief, presents one of the few academic approaches to the novella that this dissertation will cover.

Other sources of information can be drawn from side mentions in other academic articles, and only of the *Kingkiller Chronicle* novels. Rothfuss’ novella has not been deeply explored as far as this research has gone, neither “The

Lightning Tree” nor “How Old Holly Came to Be”, except for mentioning as literary recommendations (apart from Playford and Giebert). Antonio Castro Balbuena argued in 2016 that Rothfuss belongs to a group of fantasy writers that, in Spain, will help to delve on the genre basing his argument in statistic success of TV adaptations of the similar fantasy series *Game of Thrones* (17). The focus of this article, however, is not Patrick Rothfuss’ storyworld, but instead a definition of fantasy to which several authors adhere, which then suggests a categorization of Anglo-Saxon and Spanish authors whose narrations would fit within the said definition. Thus, and while Castro Balbuena mentions these literary works, it serves as an example of how academic analyses usually consider, superficially, *The Name of the Wind* and its sequel as another example of contemporary fantasy literature.

Finally, there are no academic articles regarding “How Old Holly Came to Be” nor “The Lightning Tree” as far as this research goes, and most of the non-academic publications that explore these two stories only argue about their plot or their connection to the main novels. For instance, Reddit user hamfast42 started a thread called “[Spoilers All] What on Earth is Going on in ‘How old Holly came to be?’” that attempts to find any connection between the story and the storyworld, to which pillowdemon answers that their own theory suggests that Holly is, in fact, the particularly evil tree that appears in *The Wise Man’s Fear*, the Chtaeh (n/p).

The scarcity of academic papers dealing with this storyworld strikes as impressive from a literary product that has sold over 10 million copies (Kain: n/p). One of the main possible reasons for this is the fact that some of the literary works have less than ten years from their publication, and that there are some unpublished, relevant books yet. While this is not new for academics, reticence to its exploration is understandable, assuming a more traditional approach to them. However, and as this thesis, among other researches, aims to argue, a more chronotopical understanding of ongoing storyworlds can complement that traditional approach. As new researchers start their path on Academia, the exploration of more recent products is becoming more common, which suggests a prominent trend towards opening new research fields. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary approach that this

dissertation uses helps in establishing a consistent framework that would encourage that trend. In short, this scarcity should not be understood as if the literary product has no academic value. Especially seeing how the text suggests the notions of identity and narratology, the whole storyworld presents a series of elements that make it unique and, in fact, a cultural product deeply concerned with its own construction.

While the storyworld has not brought much attention from the academic sphere, the popular one is much more prolific. The abundant examples of popular theories suggest an interest in analyzing and exploring issues and literary works outside Academia. Without delving on speculations among literary fans on how the trilogy will end, there are several ongoing inquiries from elements within the storyworld that are worth mentioning regarding identity and its building processes, especially in Digital Platforms, such as Reddit. One of them, for instance, goes on to analyze the main character from the novels from a psychoanalytical point of view, to which several users answer: the Original Poster states that Kvothe has traits that may define him as having “Major Depressive ... PTSD ... ADHD” during his childhood (AramilN: n/p), justifying that PTSD comes from “the murder of his family during childhood and his withdrawal from society until adolescence” (n/p).

Similarly, another user in another Reddit thread explores how the narrative elements connect one to another, and suggests that “there is only one story and it is a circle” within the narrative (qoou: n/p). In their analysis, qoou argues that all the background stories within the book (that is, all the story-building narratives that talk about the supernatural), are connected by several issues. The first one is the ability to see, which, as this dissertation will argue later, plays a predominant role when delving into traumatic experiences. Most of the stories within the storyworld, qoou argues, are connected through the ability (or, better, disability) of seeing. One of the characters of these stories, Jax, for instance, gets from an Old Tinker a pair of spectacles through which he could see the moon. At the same time, the character that defeats the corrupted Lanre while he destroys an ancient civilization, Selitos, performs, in qoou’s opinion, a primitive cataracts operation, through which he is

capable of seeing clearly once more (qoou: n/p). Likewise, at the University, the first stage of learning is called E'lir, which is translated as “see-er” in the storyworld (n/p), as qoou argues. That, in their opinion, would suggest another layer of world-building and seeing, which would then connect all the stories within the storyworld with each other (n/p). qoou’s analysis implies a series of elements that could be regarded as far-fetched since they assume that the connection between the act of seeing and the stories are not simple correlation, or merely that the narration suggests the importance of seeing. However, qoou supports the argument by several shreds of evidence from within the books that, if not dependence and cohesion, at least suggest certain parallelisms among the stories (n/p). Finally, it is interesting to note that, while most of the popular discussion corpus focuses on the two main novels, there are some examples of joint research on the novella and the short stories (see, for instance, Stal77 et al.), which will appear later in the dissertation.

Thus, this dissertation fills a research niche that, academically, has not been explored yet. Moreover, this research acquires further interest outside the corpus researched here, since many of its contents could help to investigate other fantasy fiction stories, especially if created as literary works, with few addenda. As such, this dissertation hopes to provide a new set of keys that will help to open the thrice-locked chest.

**SECTION I: “THINGS THAT WERE LACKING”. IDENTITY,
NARRATOLOGY, AND HIGH DARK FANTASY IN *THE KINGKILLER*
*CHRONICLE***

SUMMARY OF SECTION I

The most obvious part was a hollow, echoing quiet, made by things that were lacking. If there had been a wind it would have sighed ... if there had been a crowd, even a handful of men ... they would have filled the silence with conversation and laughter; if there had been music ... there were none of these things, and so the silence remained (Rothfuss, 2008: 1).

This first analytical section will focus on the two novels from *The Kingkiller Chronicle* that have been released so far, *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear*. It is separated into three chapters, which will cover the main issues that will be explored throughout the whole study to establish the framework that appears in the literary works from this storyworld. As such, the first chapter will primarily develop a conceptualization of high dark fantasy. Afterward, in the second chapter, the study will delve into the connection between cognitive semiotics and identity to explore the notion of identity as a discourse and how that is applied in the novels. Finally, the last chapter of this section will explore how said discourse is conveyed within the narrative structure to suggest it to the reader.

Chapter 1: High Dark Fantasy and *The Kingkiller Chronicle*

You've listened to songs about Taborlin the Great. Roaring sheets of fire, magic rings, invisible cloaks, swords that never go dull, potions to make you fly ... Well if that's what you're looking for, you can leave now, because you won't find it here. It doesn't exist". (Rothfuss, 2008: 249)

1. Introduction

This chapter will delve into the notions of high fantasy and dark fantasy to see how the two appear in Temerant's storyworld. The chapter will first review fantasy to connect the other two terms then and provide a conjoined definition of what will be called here high dark fantasy. Afterward, the chapter will offer several examples of how the novels apply this notion. With that, it will provide the framework within which the concepts of identity and narratology will appear.

Given the nature of this chapter, it will be separated into five sections, including this first one. As such, the first and second will try to cover the situation in which fantasy, and more specifically, high fantasy, is from both academic and popular sources. After these sections, the third one of this chapter will convey a definition of high dark fantasy that works for the storyworld within which these literary products are set, a definition that, essentially, merges tropes from high fantasy, to which the debate on moral, ethics, and the boundaries between what is considered good and evil within the storyworld, is added. Then, in the fourth section, the definition of high dark fantasy will be explored within the novels, studying all the factors that are key for its explanation. Finally, the last section will provide some preliminary conclusions.

2. Ontological Preliminary Issues Regarding Fantasy

While, at first, it may seem quite generalistic from what this research is exploring, it should be interesting to explore the boundaries to which academics narrow fantasy to delimit the framework within which high dark fantasy will be set later. As such, it would be interesting to offer the views of two different traditions, the Spanish and the Anglo-Saxon ones, to compare and contrast their views on the topic, and to suggest the importance of the term in these traditions.

Several Spanish critics, such as David Roas, Raúl Molina, or Luis Miguel Robledo, rather than using the term fantasy, acknowledge a genre difference between the marvelous and the fantastic and generally categorize literary works as belonging to one or another. The fantastic materializes this distinction by synthesizing what he considers the primary separation between them: “Marvelous [are those literary works] situated in a world in which the supernatural can be found, whereas the Fantastic places the story in a quotidian world that serves as an anchor to the reader” (Robledo: 278, my translation). To do so, Robledo, heavily relying on Bessiere’s definition of both terms, considers the marvelous an unrealistic element that deforms the conceptualization of reality of the subject in a way that can be seen as anticipated, normal, or predictable (278), whereas the fantastic is considered working as an unexpected element that alters the norm, or expresses its limitations (278). Therefore, the question at hand is the intention of whether these two categories normalize certain events that the reader could render as strange or not.

While this separation between fantastic and marvelous has been argued, defended, and stated over time, since it summarizes one of the central positions that critics have taken on the concept, fantasy is subject to much more controversy. That has led to it not always having been separated into these two categories, and even today, the definition of such a big concept remains slithery at best. For this dissertation, therefore, the separation between marvelous and fantastic seems less important than the focus that such a separation has on normalization, which, as will

be further developed in section four, plays a prominent role in understanding trauma. In so doing, this dissertation will not consider marvelous and fantastic two different genres, but rather elements of the fantasy genre.

Fantasy in its modern form has, for Anglo-Saxon critics Everett and Shanks, its most probable origin in *Weird Tales*, a speculative fiction magazine from the early 1920s (ix). As Everett and Shanks point out, it is true, nonetheless, that authors that wrote there were inspired by prior authors such as “Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley, ... Arthur Conan Doyle [or] H. G. Wells” (ix), but there is where “the threads spun by so many eclectic literary antecedents were woven together into something new” (x), thus suggesting that fantasy, as it is understood today, draws from these sources, but only deriving from them, rather than necessarily share elements with them. One of the aims of the magazine was to create an influential sort of literature that fought against pulp fiction’s “circulating cultural stereotype” (Carney: 6). Although the magazine was not a success in economic terms, it made authors such as H. P. Lovecraft or Robert E. Howard publish within its pages (8, 12-13), and, as such, Everett and Shanks’ consideration of this magazine as pivotal for the development of modern fantasy is well-founded (xvi).

The fantasy genre, as many critics consider it in the twenty-first century – that is to say, stories set in secondary spaces with a different technological level than the one from Western twenty-first century where the metaphysical is made patent, as Rayment argues (15-16)– is somewhat abrupt and contemporary. While, as Williamson argues, it is true that the genre of Sword and Sorcery draws back to H. Rider Haggard (14), among others, what he calls “‘pregenre’ fantasy” (1) “appeared largely undifferentiated in widely dispersed areas of the publishing market.” (1). Williamson argues that the following development motivated modern fantasy:

- (1) the revival of interest in American Sword and Sorcery and the sudden commercial explosion of Tolkien’s work in the 1960s; (2) the isolation, naming, definition, and canonization of fantasy as a discrete genre between the late 1960s

and mid- 1970s, accomplished largely through the BAFS [Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series]; and (3) the distilling of a bestseller formula for fantasy in the late 1970s, which completed what Ballantine had initiated in turning fantasy into a sibling rather than a subcategory of science fiction. (6-7)

Its appearance as a genre was not smooth, however, and some studies that vied to define fantasy were confusing or directly went against the popular definition of it, mostly shaped by BAFS canon (7-8). For instance, Williamson acknowledges Irwin's postulates when the later defines fantasy as "that kind of extended narrative which establishes and develops an artifact, that is, plays the game of the impossible" (Irwin ix, qtd. in Williamson: 9) that feels as an inclusive definition that would apply to works outside the BAFS canon.

Similarly, Williamson includes Rosemary Jackson's definition, which is focused on said canon when she argued that several works from critically acclaimed authors of fantasy could not be fully considered as fantastic (Williamson: 9). Williamson continues summarizing Jackson's considerations of fantastic literature by pointing out that she claimed that the fantastic requires a breaking of the rules that build the subject's cultural world, pointing out those things that are not only non-normative but sometimes even explicitly against the norm (Williamson: 9). While the definitions of both Irwin and Jackson are not necessarily impossible to combine, Williamson argues that they do not resonate with most of the BAFS canon: in many stories from the canon, the impossibilities about which both of them talk "do not open up any rifts in the fabric of the protagonists' fundamental conceptions of reality" (11). Following this, the book goes further to argue that the term has been used widely and referring to two different things, what Manguel, Williamson states, called Fantasy and the fantastic (11) in a way similar to what Robledo argued before, among other terminologies (12). As he says, "the terminology is, perhaps, confusingly various, but the phenomenal distinction is strikingly consistent" (12), thus leaving the answer of what fantasy is either solved as a signifier term, that is, "using it to point to a particular body of writing that (appropriately *and* inappropriately) was used to build a genre" (12, emphasis in the

original) or, alternatively, unsolved.

Among other academics, the discussion on fantasy seems to make the topic even more convoluted: accepting postulates as the mentioned above regarding fantasy would leave the term as undefined as before since it is used only within the canon. Against that, for instance, in *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James argue in favor of what they call “fuzzy sets”, a term used to explore “fantasy, from the core to the edge –that sense of more and less fantastical texts operating in conversation with each other–“ (1), with which they, along with several other researchers, explore the different sets of fantasy. Once again, the definition of the term suggests a kind of inclusion in which, fulfilling certain aspects, renders the rest as unnecessary.

But Mendlesohn and James’ *Companion* goes even further in its second section, and explores the ways in which the term fantasy has been understood through different literary theories, such as “Structuralism” (viii), where Attebery implies the origin of the notion of fantasy genre (2012: 81), “Psychoanalysis” (James and Mendlesohn: viii), in which Butler reinforces the idea of subversion within fantasy texts (2012a: 91), “Political reading” (James and Mendlesohn: viii), or, in Bould and Vint’s words, the way that “some authors have utilized fantasy for explicitly political ends” (102), or “Modernism and Postmodernism”, (James and Mendlesohn: viii), where Casey implies the inevitability of fantasy’s undefinition, but an undefinition that can be potentially charted, “as long as [these maps] are used not by conquistadors trying to claim modernism for the kingdom, nor by priests trying convert postmodernism to the religion of fantasy, but by explorers who recognize the power of maps to shape conceptual experience” (113), to then review the thematic criticism that has been done on fantasy (Mendlesohn: 125), which, Mendlesohn argues, “may be the most common approach to the literature of Fantasy among both academics and fans” (125). As such, it suggests an accessible way to engage both the popular and the academic sphere in exploring the topic, and thus

one of the most used in this dissertation when exploring high dark fantasy³.

After Mendlesohn's chapter, Gilman explore "the languages of the fantastic" (134), where she investigates how fantasy stories are linguistically conveyed, for instance, the use of "archaic language" (138) in some forms of fantasy, or the use of an "ironic style of fantasy that sets *then* and *elsewhere*, on a footing with the *otherwise*" (140, emphasis in the original). Finally, Maund explores the notion of fantasy series, where she introduces the multiple ways in which the idea of literary series appears within fantasy, from "character-dependent" (148) series, where characters are central (148) to "*scripted series*" (148, emphasis in the original), where plot is "the main driving force" (148), and a third type which she calls "thematic *series* or series of *place*" (149, emphasis in the original), in which either the setting or the theme is at the core of the readers' understanding of the series as a whole (149). The last chapter of this section explores the plausible ways of understanding what Gregory Frost calls "the slipstream" (James and Mendlesohn: viii), which, essentially, translates into "human stories but in a shape-shifting world" (Frost: 156), that is, a narrative focused on the world that "play loose with the rules of reality" (159), or, in other words, that alters the relationship that the reader has with the world in which the narration appears.

In so doing, "fuzzy sets", along with the aforementioned literary approaches towards fantasy, present a plausible understanding of what fantasy can be without delving too much into specific, exact traits. As such, the book presents several of these "fuzzy sets", as may be seen in the third section of the Companion, called "Clusters" (James and Mendlesohn: viii), including "Magical Realism" (Sieber: 165), "Writers of Colour" (Okorafor: 179) "Quest Fantasies", (Senior: 190), "Urban Fantasy" (Irvine: 200), "Dark Fantasy and Paranormal Romance" (Kaveney: 214), "Modern Children's Fantasy" (Butler, 2012b: 224), "Historical Fantasy" (Schanoes:

³ This separation between academic and popular spheres must be understood in the same way as Casey argued mapping fantasy, that is, just as a conceptual map that does not hierarchize one perception over another (113).

236), or “Fantasy of History and Religion” (Sleight: 248). These clusters help a lot shaping the elusive term of fantasy, giving a general idea on how several researchers have tackled it, or, at least, bound it to certain limitations.

Despite the success of publishing houses and general audiences that Williamson argued (6-7), the difficulty in producing a clear definition of what fantasy is motivated Andrew Rayment to suggest that, potentially, any text with a fantastic element could be fantasy (10). If so, fantasy, thus, remains among the boundaries of “genre, mode or stance” (10), which would have different implications when reading literary works with fantasy elements within them. He argues that one plausible problem with the inconsistency of definitions for fantasy derives from a diachronic approach towards the genre (11). Furthermore, and following his argument, a diachronic observation of fantasy would only base the understanding of such a genre as mostly hypothetical: exploring fantasy in a diachronic manner would only present researchers with genre considerations based on critical approaches as those mentioned above, without taking into account the synchronic nature of the phenomenon, that is, how audience conceive fantasy (11). In other words, by approaching fantasy in a diachronic manner, researchers are neglecting the conceptualization that actual, present fantasy readers (and their representatives in terms of genre classification, the publishing houses) have (11). Therefore, and aiming to be as scientific as a definition of fantasy can be, this research will also take into account the general audience’s view on the genre, mainly when categorized within the subgenre that will be defined here, namely, high dark fantasy.

As such, Rayment, following a Todorovian trend, “and in opposition to the diachronic approaches taken by Jackson, Apter, Clute and Grant, Mathews, Armitt, and virtually every other theorist of Fantasy over the past fifty years” (15) defines fantasy synchronically, and accepts the subjectivity of its definition (15), thus acknowledging the Todorovian postulate that fantasy must connect reader and characters in terms of plot and expectations (Todorov: 32). Yet these considerations are, then again, based on the premise that there is an observable implicit reader, a

reader whose reading will unequivocally lead them toward the same hesitation than the character, and that such an interpretation is (or can be, at least,) universal. While aiming to establish a genre through readers' expectations is not dangerous by itself, neglecting the foundational base of this hypothesis, actual readers, and, instead, supporting it through idealized, non-existent readers might be.

Hébert, applying Jakobsonian linguistic categories, establishes the existence of the "empirical (real) reader" (2.3) and renders the construction of that hesitation inadequate to build on, for it would be quite challenging to consider and prove that all readers would react similarly to a specific narration; if researchers wanted to explore readers' reaction, they would have to rely on statistics (as will be further argued later). All of the above leaves fantasy as a selection of literary tropes that actual, empirical readers have to accept as valid within the boundaries of fantasy. In short, while, as Roberts and MacCallum-Stewart point out, "previous studies of fantasy fiction, in particular, have often tended to distinguish between popular fantasy and the literary fantastic, opting to focus on the latter at the expense of the former" (2), the fact that those studies focus on a non-empirical reader results detrimental on the consideration of fantasy and the fantastic as genres.

The consequences of this approach are twofold. The first one is that empirical, non-academic researches can be taken into account in defining fantasy to have a representation of what audiences consider as such. These approaches need to be complemented by academic perspectives that, when merging with other viewpoints, are capable of providing a dialectic bridge through which the phenomenon of fantasy will be synchronically placed, rather than defined. The second one is that, since fantasy not only changes over time but also because of it, the only conceptualization that this research can use is a synchronic approach to the notions that, in the twenty-first century Western worldview, define fantasy from both an academic and general audiences' perspective. With that, this dissertation offers an alternative, parallel exploration to diachronic approaches to fantasy to explore the phenomenon through a different lens, aiming to provide an alternative placement of fantasy within this dissertation's chronotope. As Guanio-Uluru points

out, current understandings of what fantasy is derives from Attebery's consideration that "fantasy can be defined through significant examples of what best represents it" (12).

For this research, then, Rayment manages to provide a placement for it as a genre that works as a foundation for further definitions, and which will be modified throughout the investigation, since it establishes some minima that both publishing houses and academics agree on when considering classifications within fantasy: a focus on a determined type of setting (16). He argues that the background that characterizes fantasy as a genre has three clear elements that every contemporary work of fantasy share: they present an alternate space from the world within which the reader lives that either add or erase aspects from it, deriving on its developing a separate world, a parallel one or an extension of the "real" world (16); a "metaphysical consistency that means that the secondary space is fundamentally structured as real" (16); and a narration in which the "secondary space is always less technologically advanced than the late twentieth century/early twenty-first century" (17)⁴. This research will later explore these three elements and will add further aspects to clarify what will be considered here high dark fantasy, which is, mainly, a subgenre under the placement of fantasy that Rayment provides. Thus, this definition will be reviewed to enhance readers' (as well as publishing houses') considerations on the meaning of the genre.

3. High Fantasy in Popular and Academic Research

Even though *The Kingkiller Chronicle* could, potentially, be regarded by some critics as high fantasy, there is no clear definition of what that means either. The term has been the subject of many studies and too many redefinitions in Western society. It seems unfeasible, then, to put them all together in a single,

⁴ Rayment's book was published in 2014.

inclusive definition. Especially after the 1970s, the growth of “global” networks has led to a popularization and democratization of spheres that were previously only studied by scholars, and thus we find new research corpora to bear in mind in websites such as *Reddit* or *4chan*, among an enormous quantity of blogs and publishers that share their opinion as well. This democratization has led to a wide array of redefinitions and renewed processes of questioning and answering that prompted, to some extent, to a polarization of the definitions of the term, one popular and one academic. As such, this dissertation will take into consideration both of them to suggest a plausible, consensual definition of the concept. Given the importance of popular readings and examinations when publishing fantasy works (and therefore, spreading a perception of what fantasy is), and more specifically to the terms that are being explored here, both high and dark fantasy, their insights must be taken into account when arguing the terms, since not only they carry in-depth analyses of the concepts that are being explored here that must be taken into account for the sake of a more democratic understanding, but also because popular considerations of the genre suggest the publishing and reading notions that general audiences consider, and therefore shape future literary works that will be labeled as fantasy as was mentioned earlier.

An academic discussion on high fantasy requires certain aspects that specify the sort of fantasy readers are facing. For Brian Attebery, as several researches have explored, such as “Ways of Tying Events to Values or Ideas”:

High fantasy establishes a sphere of significance, in which the actions of the hero and inhuman, helper or villain, reflect a coherent and extractable order. Characters are not merely individuals but the upholders of moral and intellectual standards. (Attebery, 1980: 13)

Attebery not only implies that the figure of the hero is inherent to the high fantasy, but also that, like the Arthurian Cycle, or other chivalry narratives, the Hero of high fantasy embodies a symbolical meaning that is beyond themselves, to which Timmerman agrees (98). The latter reinforces this by suggesting the idea that the

target reader is usually capable of discerning a particular moral code through the narrative, some ethical boundaries that the reader tends to create when reading the book (29), e.g. the upholder of truth over the upholder of deception when hierarchizing standards, knowledge over ignorance or friends over blood or vice versa, that are free to be explored thanks to the impossibility of the world at hand (29)⁵.

One example of what Attebery would refer to as high fantasy taken from the last decades would be *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms*, by N. K. Jemisin, which tells the story of Yeine Darr in a world in which gods with supernatural abilities live among humans in the floating city of Sky, and where the hero fights against an oppressive system (Jemisin). This book fulfills the two requirements that the critic sets as necessary: the gods and the humans that are present in the book are significant to specific ethical standards, such as the fight against oppression, or the defense of the status quo. And their actions shape the narrative world, being primarily significant to the pragmatikós (as defined in Rayment: 16): the world changes thanks to the efforts of villains and heroes, the protagonist being in a situation of power that allows her to question, subvert, or reinforce certain aspects of it. Chapter 3 shows examples of these, where the protagonist, a human, fights and kills a god: “I lunged. The knife went into his chest, going deep before lodging in bone with such a sudden impact that my hand was jarred free of the hilt ... ‘I have waited so long for you’, the god breathed. Then he kissed me. Then he fell” (Jemisin: 61), implying the god’s death.

Another example of high fantasy that fits Attebery’s definition would be Jennifer Fallon’s 2004 novel *Wolfblade*. Set in the non-existent nation of Hythria, Marla Wolfblade, the princess, is forced to grow in a time of political turmoil, taking a series of decisions that involves, among other things, magic (Fallon). It can easily be considered as a high fantasy text, for it adheres to the two precepts that Attebery

⁵ For more on the concept of hero, see Vogler and Montez.

suggested: Marla's actions indeed shape the world, subverting institutional oppression and transforming societal structures (Epilogue) in a similar way to what *The Hundred Thousand Kingdoms* did (Jemisin: 61). The central character, finally, harbingers a series of moral and intellectual standards, rather than being just a mere individual (Fallon), given her social status.

To this discussion, Charles Sullivan III adds two new elements to the ones that Attebery considers to be quintessential to high fantasy. To him, high fantasy's societal structure derives primarily "from medieval romance[s] as is much of the material culture and technology" (Sullivan: n/p). That is to say, that nobility relies on castles and enormous mansions while common folk live in farms or, at best, in small houses in early cities, that businesses are an idealized version of them, which commonly includes ample taverns, fully-equipped forges and a wide array of fully-stocked vendors that sometimes sell magical items and amulets that provide the hero with supernatural abilities (n/p). This also implies an idealized vision of lower classes that, if the main character is not part of the nobility, are allowed to climb the social ladder if they "prove [themselves] worthy (in which case, [they], too will join the elite at the end of the tale)" (n/p).

He also explains that high fantasy is often quite concerned with style, being "what separates the good from the bad ... the difference between content and intent" (n/p). To him, the inclusion of magical elements *per se* was not an indication of having an example of high fantasy, or even fantasy at all: he goes on to suggest that a chronotopic analysis of the language used in the literary work is necessary to a better understanding of it (n/p). Through its weaving, language transfers the reader's pragmatikós (Rayment: 16), or, instead, reshapes it by replacing it with a new one. In this sense, in high fantasy, it plays a significant role as a tool to alter and recreate reality. However, one must ascertain the alienating power of language too: by representing reality (or trying to do so), readers are forced to detach themselves from their idea to a more conventional one (Sullivan: n/p). Language, in this case, is not regarded only in its most utilitarian form but instead obtains the power to shape whatever reality the reader accepts as valid (n/p).

Furthermore, if delving into different linguistic uses, when language is not argued plainly but rather through literary figures, such as metaphors or metonymies, it is even more powerful, since it normalizes said linguistic creations, and provide a sense of it being regularly used to that purpose in the genre. Sullivan III goes further on to argue that high fantasy uses language the same way as epic or mythic narratives do (n/p). The concepts have to be detached from the chronotopic imprint of the reader for them to consider the text as high fantasy: He first makes a list of high fantasy elements that include “dragons, witches, wizards, shape-changers, magic spells and rings, cloaks of invisibility and the like” (n/p), and states that “By the late nineteenth century, consensus reality no longer included those items ... and including them in the content ... create[s] a story that [is], in fact, *a departure from consensus reality* - that is, a high fantasy” (n/p, my emphasis).

One example of this would be the 2008 novel *The Painted Man* by Peter V. Brett. This book tells the story of three different characters living in a world in which demons called “corelings” constantly attack humanity (Brett). The narrative presents the development of the characters that decide to embark on personal quests that would help humanity as a whole (Brett). Apart from the characteristics that Attebery outlined before –the characters uphold moral standards and try to become heroes, and their actions are world-shaping since they effectively change the result of the war– here we see the two elements that Sullivan argues as necessary to a work to be considered high fantasy: during the war, humanity has been forced to an argument of pre-Renaissance science and technology, therefore emulating medieval romances (Brett). Furthermore, the tone of the narrator is elevated and serious. Consider the following excerpt:

Arlen’s dreams that night were filled with images of *hills that touched the sky*, and *ponds so big you can put a whole town on the surface*. He saw yellow sand stretching as far as his eyes could see, and a walled fortress hidden in the trees ... He woke up with a start, his pallet damp with sweat. It was still dark, but there was a *faint lightening on the horizon, where the indigo sky held a touch of red*. (Brett: 37, my emphases)

As can be seen, especially in the emphasized sections, the narration is suggesting a concern with the tone the story uses, shaping, as Sullivan pointed out, in detail the setting the story conveys.

Another good example of what Sullivan considers as high fantasy is Anthony Ryan's *Blood Song* (2011a). The protagonist, Vaelin, is an urchin left at the door of a temple of an order of warrior-priests that are devoted to war, to austerity, and loyalty to King Janus. As the story develops, he will be "destined for a future he has yet to comprehend. A future that will alter not only the realm, but the world" (2011b: n/p). The setting, once again, is one based on a romanticized version of medieval times. Moreover, and although slightly less present than in other literary works, the supernatural is present, either in the form of prophecy or in the shape of supernatural powers. The solemn style is also present:

Vaelin whirled, drawing the bow - too late, knocked flat by a hard mass of muscle, his bow gone from his hand. He scrambled for his knife, instinctively kicking out as he did so, hitting nothing. There were screams as he surged to his feet, screams of pain and terror, something wet lashed across his face, stinging his eyes. He staggered, tasting the iron sting of blood, wiping frantically at his eyes, blearily focusing on the now silent camp, seeing two yellow eyes gleaming in the firelight above a red stained muzzle. The eyes met his, blinked once and the wolf was gone. (2011a: 11)

Here the solemnity is suggested by giving importance to each element that is described, slowing the narration so that readers can explore each of the sensations and events that happen in the paragraph.

As for a popular consideration of high fantasy, Charlotte Burcher, et al. briefly defines high fantasy in *Fantasy Fiction 101*. Within it, they argue that these stories are "often rooted in Norse and Celtic mythology, feature ... large casts of characters, arduous quests ... objects [that] play an important role ..." (227), and that world-building and serialization of the narratives are very common. It is interesting to note that this popular definition of high fantasy has, at its core, an

analysis of tropes from books that publishers have considered to be high fantasy (226), and not the opposite.

One example of this could be Gene Wolfe's *The Wizard Knight* series of 2005. Throughout its two books, the book tells the story of Sir Able, who wanders around two worlds, searching for different objects and meeting with unusual creatures that offer him gifts and powers. At the end of the first book, Sir Able dies sacrificing himself in the process of killing a dragon (Wolfe), but he soon reappears in the second book to fight in the war between king Arnthor's army and the cannibalistic Osterling's army. Once Arnthor's army is victorious, Sir Able, who is, in fact, an American boy that had been kidnapped and brought to that world, asks from his new lord to bring a message for his brother back in America, which is, allegedly, the actual book (Wolfe). There are several quests that Sir Able undertakes, including among others slaughtering a dragon or winning a war, and includes at least twelve characters that appear regularly in the narrative, which is wide enough to cover two different volumes, *The Knight*, and *The Wizard*, collected in a single tome in 2005. The dragon, moreover, can be related with Celtic tradition, since, as Lazaro points out, "Dragons ... were, to the Celts, indicators of great power" (n/p). It can be argued, therefore, that this collection is part of the high fantasy corpus.

Another excellent example of a popularly defined as high fantasy work is *The Night Angel Trilogy* by Brent Weeks. This series of books, consisting in *The Way of Shadows*, *Shadow's Edge*, and *Beyond the Shadows* tells the story of Azoth, a member of the Black Dragon Guild of thieves, and Logan Gyre, a nobleborn, that are engulfed in a plot to eventually kill a deity to save the kingdom of Cenaria (2009). Throughout its pages, Western, white medievalism –as Young uses the term (11-12)– can be seen, mostly by contrasting Cenaria against other regions, among other things, in terms of its Whiteness –concept explored by Young (10-13)– (Weeks, 2009). Moreover, the allós (Rayment: 16) relies in medieval romances and Norse and Celtic mythology, visible, for instance, in the figure of the Seraph, or, as Garry and De Rose state, supporting their argument on Mettinger, the myth of a

deity that resurrects, not as a specific archetype, but rather as a recurrent theme in Indo-European mythologies (Garry and De Rose: 19, 20).

Thus, in trying to convey a definition for high fantasy that serves to the purpose of this thesis, I have primarily reviewed three sources that set the basis of my description of high fantasy, namely Attebery, Sullivan III, and Burcher et al., which applies to *The Kingkiller Chronicle* and its storyworld. Set in the fictional world of Temerant, an innkeeper named Kote tells the story of his mythical/legendary youth, and how it came to be who he is at the moment of telling the story. Only with the title, one might react to both the solemnness of the story as well as the relevancy of the actions of the protagonist. Moreover, throughout the narration, Kvothe (the actual name of the protagonist) justifies his actions as what was morally acceptable given the circumstances. The setting is medieval, although evolving, both from a sociocultural aspect (including, but not only, a feudalist system and a technological level before the fifteenth century), where the allós is heavily Celtic-reliant, and where Kvothe must complete the quest of defeating a group of humanoids called the Chandrian. Finally, serialization is here present too. Until now, there are two novels from *The Kingkiller Chronicle* published, *The Name of the Wind* (2008) and *The Wise Man's Fear* (2011a), while three other publications enrich the storyworld and bring up unsolved issues from the core trilogy: *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* (2014a), “The Lightning Tree” (2015a) and “How Old Holly Came to Be” (2013a).

4. (High) Dark Fantasy and Rothfuss' *The Kingkiller Chronicle*

Dark fantasy is another term that lacks a unified definition. Lucy Snyder considers dark fantasy a label that was created to prevent censorship or, at least, to camouflage the intentions of telling a story that may as well belong to the horror genre (n/p). In her view, dark fantasy is quite similar to what we have been describing here as high fantasy, but for the technological level of the fictional world,

which she does not mention as strictly relevant, and adding elements of horror (n/p). She also points out that “In many Dark fantasies, there’s an implied comfort to the reader ... The characters the reader cares about will usually make it out alive in the end ... Readers don’t get that comfort in many horror novels and movies” (n/p). This definition can be complemented by Alan Baxter’s. According to the latter, “a work is dark fantasy if it deals with any elements of fantasy and the paranormal in a way that studies the dark and frightening side of our nature, psychology and the weird, sublime and uncanny” (Penn and Baxter: n/p). In short, narratives that deal with adult-themed plots, in which Fantasy is at its core, in a way that the reader tends to identify as bleak or sinister (Stableford: 97). The seriousness of tone that characterizes high fantasy should be taken into account when considering this genre, especially when trying to merge them. It is also interesting to note that the boundary between horror and dark fantasy is fragile, for they both rely on a tendency to produce rejection in the shape of fear or at least disgust. One of the most common characteristics in this sort of works, as suggested in Vergara, is that the characters cannot be easily pinpointed as good or bad but rather are morally ambiguous (n/p). Ultimately, this sort of works usually offers a series of moral decisions that pose questions about ethics. Although this could be a problem when conjoined with high fantasy, considering that the genre is thought to have characters that stand and set specific moral standards, as stated above, it is essential to remember that, in dark fantasy, morals might be as complex and variable as the situations, and that evil and good are ambiguous enough to suggest different routes towards them.

One example of a high dark fantasy narrative could appear within the *Dragon Age* storyworld, with works such as *Dragon Age: Origins* (2009), or Gaider’s *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne* (2012). Set in the fictional kingdom of Ferelden, within the magical world of Thedas, the former tells the story of a hero that saves the world against a magical curse called “The Blight” and the creatures that are related to it called the “Darkspawn”. Thus, the main character has to unite every faction within the realm to face a creature with the spirit of an old god and

the body of a dragon: The Archdemon (*Dragon Age: Origins*). The latter tells the story of Maric, a young prince who attempts to restore his sovereign rights after his mother, the Rebel Queen, is murdered by her lords (Gaider). Every condition of high fantasy is within both works, but they tend to convey an idea of grittiness and rejection. Consider the following excerpt:

Tears welled up in his eyes, and he choked on his words: “She was your Queen, and you killed her!” He slammed the head again, still harder. This time the man stopped fighting back. A cloying, meaty smell assaulted Maric’s nostrils ... He felt physically ill, his stomach twisting in knots and his body shaking. Almost involuntarily, he brought a hand up to his mouth to keep his bile down, smearing fresh blood onto his face. There was gore on his hand, clumps of skin and hair. He convulsed, vomiting onto the muddy ground what little lunch he had eaten earlier in the day. Despair threatened to overwhelm him. (19)

The gritty approach towards the notion of despair in this fragment quite suggests the idea of it being a dark fantasy, where vomit, tears, and gore invade the narration to convey in the reader this sensation of darkness, or of rejection towards what is happening.

Another excellent example of high dark fantasy would be the Broken Empire Trilogy by Mark Lawrence, consisting of *Prince of Thorns*, *King of Thorns*, and *Emperor of Thorns* (2011-2013). In this series, the reader follows the story of Jorg Ancrath in his rise towards the Broken Empire’s throne, while providing a detailed insight of his traumas and scars (2011;2012; 2013). He also has power over the dead and charms his way through the living (2011;2012; 2013). The books contain gritty, dark depictions of the main character/narrator. For instance, the following excerpt, that appears at the very beginning of the book, when readers learn that Jorg and his brotherhood of murderers have just finished raiding a farm community and finding one survivor:

He didn’t seem too worried. It’s hard to worry a man so close to the worm-feast. Still, it irked me that he held me so lightly and called me a ‘boy’. “Do you have

daughters, farmer? Hiding in the cellar maybe? Old Rike will sniff them out.” [The farmer] looked sharp at that, pained and sharp “How old are you, boy?” Again the boy. “Old enough to slit you open like a fat purse” ... “Take his head” I told [the members of the brotherhood]. “Leave his fat belly for the ravens”. (2011: 3)

Similar to what happened in the *Dragon Age* series, the descriptions include several gritty details of the dead people that surround the farmer and the boy, thus conveying this notion of darkness and rejection.

All of this may be enough to argue what dark fantasy is, and the characteristics that define a high dark fantasy: a work set in a fictional, immersive world heavily inspired in Celtic and Nordic mythology, with a medieval technological and social level, where the supernatural is immanent, with a hero that upholds a complex moral-ethical code, whose actions reshape the world, written with a certain degree of solemnity, exploring dark psychological dilemmas, and a tendency towards a metatextual element of reliability on a happy ending (which, of course, might be truncated to produce the opposite effect without it meaning that the literary work is not part of the dark fantasy tradition). As the analysis will suggest, *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld fits all these features and, therefore, belongs, at least partly, to dark fantasy.

The core novels are the most paradigmatic examples of what has been defined as high dark fantasy in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld. *The Kingkiller Chronicle* starts with a prologue from which this dissertation takes its name: “The Waystone Inn lay in silence, and it was a silence of three parts” (Rothfuss, 2008: 1). The work then goes on to separate the three silences as the literal one, produced by “things that were lacking” (1) –that is, absence of sound–, a second one described as “a small, sullen silence” (1), made by the two customers at the tavern not talking about serious issues and instead maintaining a light conversation (1), and a third one, “not an easy thing to notice” (1):

The third silence was not an easy thing to notice. If you listened for an hour, you might begin to feel it in the wooden floor underfoot and in the rough, splintering

barrels behind the bar. It was in the weight of the black stone hearth that held the heat of a long dead fire. It was in the slow back and forth of a white linen cloth rubbing along the grain of the bar. And it was in the hands of the man who stood there, polishing a stretch of mahogany that already gleamed in the lamplight ... it was the ... sound of a man who is waiting to die. (1)

This prologue separated in silences, especially the last one, impregnate the work with a sense of mystery that will be key for the reading. There is an implied sense of nostalgia and emptiness that contrasts with the high fantasy's usual tone of greatness, offering a darker perspective instead. These silences appear at the prologue and epilogue of each of the core books that have been published. This repetition implies that even when the tone suggests otherwise, there is an irredeemable doom awaiting at the end of the narration. This notion of destruction correlates with the same sense of Wyrd that Nordic mythology connects with Odin (Ganglerisgrove: n/p), or fairy tales from which the tradition nurtures⁶. The prologue also works as a presentation of the storyworld. On a single page, the Waystone Inn appears as lacking everything but a hearth whose fire had been off for some time and illuminated by a lamplight (Rothfuss, 2008: 1). The first chapters will set the world's technological level and its distance from the referential world.

The Kingkiller Chronicle features a convoluted relationship between people and the supernatural. On the one hand, the institution known as the University educates how to differentiate between mythos and logos, between allós and pragmatikós (Rayment: 16) to those who can afford it within the storyworld. This aim to debunk the storyworld's superstitions includes the reader since the storyworld's pragmatikós does not relate to the one the reader's referential world has. The first chapter shows the first instance of this in the shape of the Scrael, pig-sized arachnid creatures that have "no blood ... no organs. Just grey inside" (Rothfuss, 2008: 9) on which Kvothe does not comment too much. On the other, the belief in the supernatural is world-pervading: when the usual patrons of the

⁶ See Trahern: 162-166 for more on this.

Waystone Inn manage to see one of these creatures, they invoke the supernatural to protect them, namely, Tehlu (a deity), and iron, known for its ability to repel demons (9). While there are not many mentions to the supernatural in general, Kvothe's reaction to his assistant Bast implies that he knows about it and that superstition and religion are something that he dislikes: "They took it to the priest. He did all the right things for all the wrong reasons" (12), implying that, for Kvothe, that part of the *allós* (religion) is not attractive, whereas the *pragmatikós* is correct. This separation between religion and other supernatural-explaining sources appears as a common trope within the core novels, where Kvothe's mentality is central, and more often than not, Kvothe argues with people because of their superstitions, and the hierarchical relationship between *pragmatikós* and *allós* is what pervades most of Kvothe's learning at the University.

Magic is perhaps the most prominent aspect that suffers from a rationalization of a different *pragmatikós*. In *Temerant*, there are two types of magic: sympathy and naming. Once explained, the rules of sympathy could be considered somewhat homeopathic. It is based on the following principles:

First, energy cannot be created or destroyed. When you are lifting one [coin] and the other rises off the table, the one in your hand feels as heavy as if you're lifting both, because, in fact, you are ... No sympathetic link is perfect. The more dissimilar the items, the more energy is lost. (76)

This idea is similarly stated by Frazer when analyzing magic from a historical point of view (n/p), but in a world in which these are, effectively, performative speech acts⁷.

In this storyworld, sympathy works by connecting items, the more similar, the better (Rothfuss, 2008: 76). Sympathy, then, suggests that there are certain qualities in objects, such as their material or their origin, that make it easier for a

⁷ See Austin.

sympathist to establish a link between them. Blood is also considered an item subject to the rules of sympathy in the storyworld (266), thus being able to create connections between one's blood and a bloodstain. These connections, at the same time, suggest a rather essentialist and materialist reading: if the reader is to understand that blood belongs to the same category as a coin because they carry something essential, inherent to each item, any embodiment containing blood belongs to the material world and thus is subject to sympathy. This sort of "magic" requires the performer to follow specific rules that adhere to, among others, Crowley's postulates, including a physical component –the coin mentioned above, for instance– (Crowley: 134, 135), and choreographed movements –that is, the binding itself– (78), but they lack any connection between the individual and a supernatural being, which Crowley considers the "Union with God" (10). Sympathy subverts this last rule to suggest that either science in *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is an extension of magic, or that magic is science insofar as it rationalizes its laws and materials, thus abandoning its metaphysical aspect and leaving it to a mental exercise in which the sympathist must believe both in something and in its opposite (2008: 70-71), among other things.

The magic of naming exemplifies a connection between a supernatural power and the narration. "Names are the shape of the world" (614), and knowing the actual name of something, allegedly, gives one power over it. The mechanisms and the names, of course, remain unknown for the reader, since no character seems to be able to explain how naming works. The only one who seems to know it is Master Elodin, one of Kvothe's professors, while he stays at the University (233). However, it is said in the Chronicle that owning a name implies dominion over something or someone, as indicated in "*I have your name now ... I have mastery over you*" (2011a: 606, emphases in the original), or when Kvothe learns "the sudden son of [Felurian]" (640). This example of the supernatural, naming power, not only points out to the same mythological source than other works of fantasy – i.e. Celtic and Nordic tradition (Lindow: 37; McCoy: Ch. 1, Ch. 6)–, where naming acquired a solemn, religious meaning, but it also suggests a link between magical

performative acts and the mundane. For example, Kvothe can name the wind (occasionally), a feat that only a few can perform, and that Temerant's scientific community cannot explain. Naming something, knowing the actual name of something gives the namer power over that thing, thus being able to defy any natural law and, instead, being able to command it (2008: 458). The fact that Kvothe knows the name of the wind reinforces another of the principles of the high dark fantasy tradition, the world-shaping ability of the main character.

Another appearance of the supernatural comes from the main antagonists in Kvothe's story: the Chandrian. The Chandrian appear as humanoids that possess abilities beyond human Temerant's pragmatikós and are not codified in the University's documents but as children's stories creatures at best. However, and in contrast with other sources of allós that the University studies (demons, for instance), in this case, there is not recodification towards the pragmatikós. Instead, their existence is negated (Rothfuss, 2008: 253-255). While the Chandrian have not been portrayed yet, apart from being humanoids, there has been speculation about their nature (Tuorum: n/p). They are the killers of Kvothe's troupe, where readers get to know the name of two of them: Haliar and Cinder (Rothfuss, 2008: 116-117). Throughout Temerant, these characters are considered myths and part of the world-wide folklore (albeit having different names depending on the region), and instead of focusing on finding answers regarding these creatures, people consider them "bedtime stories" (245). While Kvothe tries to pragmatize their existence, most of the people in Temerant has regarded them as something imaginary, part of their folklore.

One of the episodes of the Chronicle that most deals with the supernatural is the episode of Felurian in *The Wise Man's Fear*. Felurian, a Fae, introduces the main character to a parallel world through a portal (2011a: 631) in which the power relationship between Temerant's allós and its pragmatikós is inverted, and the allós becomes normative. There, Kvothe can see how to weave a cloak with shadows (662), or where space and time are intertwined, and the latter is just a coordinate of the former (663). In short, the Fae world seems to be a complete opposite to

Temerant in terms of where allós and pragmatikós are subverted, yet sharing some traits in terms of world-building. For instance, although different from the more city-based Temerant, the Fae World is described as an eternal wild, pastoral image, as the following excerpt suggests:

With every step I took, my mood teetered between boredom and anxiety. I was in the Fae, after all. I should be seeing marvelous things. Castles of glass. Burning fountains. Bloodthirsty trow. Barefoot old men, eager to give me advice ... The trees gave way to a great grassy plain. All the parts of the Fae Felurian had shown me had been forested. So this seemed a clear sign I was well outside the bounds of where I ought to be. Still I continued, enjoying the feel of sunlight on my skin after so long in the dim twilight of Felurian's glade. The trail I followed seemed to be leading to a lone tree standing in the grassy field. (676-677)

The only section of the Fae world that appears to have any buildings or any trace of artificiality is Felurian's refuge: "I opened my eyes and saw trees stretched against a twilight sky. There were silken pillows all around me ... I looked around the pavilion at silken draperies and scattered cushions" (632). The surprise that Kvothe implies suggests a shift in the paradigm: in the Fae World, nature is over artificiality.

The relationship between these two worlds connects with the argument that Eckman does regarding Faerie worlds: he argues that Faerie worlds usually fall into three categories when concerning the mundane: "either Faerie is an Otherworld, accessible ... only by magic or certain portals ... or Faerie and mundanity intermingle in so-called crosshatches ... or Faerie lies next to, or is surrounded by, mundanity" (71-72). In this case, the connection seems to be unclear, suggesting the reader at first that it is the first option, where it may be as well the second (as the connection between the Fae moon and Temerant's moon that will be explored later implies) or even the third one. It is interesting to note that the narrator describes a sense of detachment, appearing mainly due to his expectations of what he would find in this world, which suggests that, culturally, the Fae World appears as an Otherworld. There are some elements, particularly naming and the Chandrian, that

are a constant insofar as they are supernatural forces that had no explanation apart from them being inexplicable. However, the tone with which characters speak of them is inverted: grammarie, a sort of magic the Fae consider something “as [natural] as breathing” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 651). Alternatively, the Fae regard the Chandrian with utmost seriousness: “‘no,’ she said, looking me squarely in the eye, her back straight. ‘I will not speak of the seven.’ Her soft voice held no lilting whimsy. No playfulness. No room for discussion or negotiation” (652). With this, both the lack of description and the inversion of tone regarding naming and the Chandrian, the narration highlights the inversion between these two worlds, focusing on their differences (albeit, allegedly, having a similar political system). These differences have several implications regarding cultural identity. The most interesting to note is that the narrative reinforces the difference between both worlds, suggesting that the Fae world (natural, allós-related) and Temerant (civilized, pragmatikós-related) invert their moral standards.

The moon is a constant through the narration, having a significant influence on the mythos of the storyworld. The moon acquires a supernatural distinction, it being the link between both Temerant and the Fae world. The narration thus provides Temerant with more magic and more supernatural elements that detach it from the referential world. Kvothe has a connection to the moon, as Felurian suggests:

the moon has our two worlds beguiled, like parents clutching at a child, pulling at her, to and fro, neither willing to let go ... when she is torn, half in your sky, you see how far apart we lie ... and when your moon is waxing full, all of faerie feels the pull. She draws us close to you, so bright. and now a visit for a night is easier than walking through a door or stepping off a ship that’s near the shore. (671)

Auri, a recurrent character in the novels with whom Kvothe talks and that appears, specifically, in six chapters of *The Name of the Wind* and ten of *The Wise Man’s Fear*, on which this research focuses on its second section, also has a fixation with the moon, fearing it (2008: 466). Furthermore, in *The Wise Man’s Fear*, Kvothe

tells that he heard the story of Jax, a person who steals the moon, although she can escape from time to time, thus explaining the cycles (2011a: 588-594). Interestingly enough, the Fae also know this story (668). The moon, therefore, serves as a link between the human and the Fae worlds. Elodin, Kvothe's naming master, asks in one of Kvothe's exams, "where does the moon go ... when it is no longer in our sky?" (88). While he is often considered by his colleagues and Kvothe's fellow students a crazy person (2008: 301), indeed living in the University Asylum, where the institution had tried to lock him for a long time, but never able given his naming abilities, he is also narratologically constructed as "the mad hermit" (303), and hence the possessor of ancient knowledge⁸. The connection between the narration and the moon is made mainly through Auri, Felurian, and Elodin. Auri, who is called by Kvothe "moon-fey" (353), and later "moon Fae" (2011a: 35) Felurian, who is, in fact, a Fae, and is necessarily connected to the moon, as she explains (671) and Elodin, who is regarded as a powerful namer, who knows about the Fae (942), and that is, allegedly, connected to the namers who gave shape to the world and are, the book suggests, Fae-folk (pharelljordan et al. n/p).

These supernatural elements also acquire some darkness throughout the books. The most representative of this fact is the scene with the Chtaeh, an Oracle-tree which appears as having "the gift of seeing, but it only tells things to hurt men" (Rothfuss, 2011a: 683). What is interesting about this section is not only that a tragic figure such as this is brought to the scene, but rather the procedure by which the narrator contests the reader's expectations of the Fae World. Up until that moment, the Fae world has been described in a rather pastoral way, where nature seems to be in harmony. Moreover, the first image that Kvothe has of the Chtaeh is that of a bed of flowers in the distance, a field where butterflies rest when he approaches: "What I had taken at first to be a bed of flowers beneath the tree turned out to be a carpet of butterflies almost completely covering the ground" (677). However, the truth

⁸ As stated in the book, the hero "finds the mad hermit in the Woods, proves himself worthy, and learns the names of all things, just like Taborlin the Great" (303-304).

seems to be other: “It was only after my eyes followed them to the base of the tree that I saw the truth. The ground below was not a resting place for butterflies . . . it was strewn with lifeless wings” (678). While at first, the encounter seems to be the encounter with a “benevolent retreating *ieron* of comedy in its figure of the ‘old wise man’” (Frye: 195, emphasis in the original), the narration soon shows the creature’s whimsical and cruel nature, killing butterflies either because they “offend my aesthetic” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 678) or because of “Pure spite . . . I envied its innocence” (679). The Chtaeh then goes on exposing Kvothe’s central trauma, forcing him to remember, selecting the words that would hurt him the most. “Cinder is the one you want. Remember him? White hair? Dark eyes? Did things to your mother, you know . . .” (680). Finally, the creature exposes another of Kvothe’s flaws: Denna, a character about which Kvothe is obsessed, is suffering abuse from one of her patrons: “He beats her, you know. Her patron. Not all the time, but often. Sometimes in a temper, but mostly it’s a game to him. . . . It’s nothing grotesque, mind you. . . . Not yet . . . Two days ago he used his walking stick. That was new” (681). The crudeness with which the Chtaeh pronounces these words, as well as its amusement, suggests a new layer of darkness, where domestic violence is, at the same time, put into light and then accepted by the Chtaeh as standard, as something where innovation can be amusing.

Much of the technological level shown in the Chronicle adheres to the usual technology that we find in many high fantasy and dark fantasy settings. In chapter two, for instance, the reader finds that there are “ex-soldiers with hunting bows” (2008: 18), the implication being that the technological level has not yet developed gunpowder weapons. Furthermore, professions, such as blacksmiths, farmers, barmaids, warriors, or troupers, especially the latest, are also romanticized. As for weapons and transportation, the book shares the usual tropes of Western high fantasy and the Sword and sorcery sub-genre: swords and horses (Geduld: n/p). Nevertheless, the University in Temerant, an educational institution, and a place where more than a third of the narrative up until *The Wise Man’s Fear* is based is a

center of knowledge. There, the technological level profoundly contrasts with the rest of Temerant.

While regarded with suspicion outside their walls, academics of the university can blend magic with technology to cultivate civilization beyond the rest of the natural world. For example, they know about gunpowder, physics, infections, and chemical reactions, and learn medicine, chemistry, languages, history, as well as sympathy, naming, or sygaldry, which, “simply put, is a set of tools for channeling forces. Like sympathy made solid” (Rothfuss, 2008: 334). A perfect example of this blending would be the Artificery, commonly called the Fishery (296):

The building held shops for glassblowers, joiners, potters, and glaziers. There was also a full forge and smelt-works that would figure prominently in any metallurgist’s daydreams ... it was big as the inside of a granary, holding at least two dozen thick-timbered worktables strewn with countless, nameless tools and projects in progress. (296)

Kilvin’s workshop, then, is described as an advanced laboratory, where students learn sygaldry. By combining runes and technology, people working in the Artificery are capable of creating products to be later sold. One of the most demanded articles in the Fishery is a sympathy lamp, which, mainly, functions as an electrical lamp, using energy to produce light:

[H]igh among the high rafters of the workshop a half hundred glass spheres hung from chains. They were of varying sizes, though none were much larger than a man’s head. (297)

The description continues as follows:

And they were burning. It was only then that I realized what they were. Some were filled with liquid and wicking, much like ordinary lamps, but most of them were utterly unfamiliar. One contained nothing but a boiling grey smoke that flickered sporadically. Another sphere contained a wick hanging in empty air from a silver

wire, burning with a motionless white flame despite its apparent lack of fuel. (296-297)

By mixing magic and science, the narrative suggests pragmatizing the former, enabling a subversion of the magic trope that, in a lot of contemporary high fantasy, as well as fairy tales, is considered supernatural and inexplicable⁹.

The Chtaeh shares the common view of the people of Temerant and despises the knowledge learned at the University. However, contrary to the prevalent fear of the unknown, the Chtaeh hates it because it leads to arrogance: “You assume you know everything. You laughed at faeries until you saw one. Small wonder all your *civilized* neighbors dismiss the Chandrian as well” (2011a: 680, my emphasis). What is presented to the reader is a Supernatural figure (the Chtaeh) in the shape of a natural element (the tree) that not only is omniscient but also despises educational institutions insofar as they are civilized. To convolute the answer to the dichotomy, the Chtaeh is also depicted as morally evil, and narratologically as a villain. In so doing, the narrative questions the reader’s moral standards and visions regarding the dichotomy between civilization and nature, albeit not presenting a clear position for or against any of them.

Finally, the books present specific moral-shading dilemmas through different characters, mainly Kvothe. Such ethical dilemmas not only implies an engagement with character development and character shaping but also, by presenting different characters, each of them with various moral issues, the storyworld effectively suggests its focus with varied perspectives and epistemological interpretations. Mainly *The Wise Man’s Fear* contains four passages that indicate the connection between high fantasy and dark fantasy that appeared earlier. The first passage is an account of one of Kvothe’s first dealings with society when he is thirteen years old, using explicit cruelty against children and the hero’s instinctual violence to suggest the books’ dark fantasy elements

⁹ See for instance, Douglass; Burcher et al.; or Lawrence (2011).

(2008: 132-135). As usual in the book, when the main character is making a decision, it is forced upon him, rather than actively doing something to change his situation:

Suddenly I was back on the streets of Tarbean. Three boys, bigger than me with greasy hair and piggish eyes had dragged me from the broken crate where I'd been sleeping. Two of them held me down, pinning my arms. I lay in a stagnant puddle that was bitterly cold ... One of them had his hand over my mouth. It didn't matter. I had been in the city for months. I knew better than to yell for help. At best no one would come. At worst someone would, and then there would be more of them. Two of them held me down. The third cut my clothes off my body. He cut me. They told me what they were going to do. Their breath was horribly warm against my face. They laughed. (639)

Comparatively, this section is grittier than previous chapters, in an attempt to present the character as a subject of circumstances when he takes action:

There in Tarbean, halfnaked and helpless, I felt something well up inside me. I bit two fingers off the hand over my mouth. I heard a scream and swearing as one of them staggered away. I strained and strained against the one who was still on top of me. I heard my own arm break, and his grip loosened. I started to howl. I threw him off. Still screaming I stood, my clothes hanging in rags around me. I knocked one of them to the ground. My scrabbling hand found a loose cobblestone and I used it to break one of his legs. I remember the noise it made. I flailed until his arms were broken, then I broke his head. (639)

While this decision is not substantial at a bigger scale, it serves as an example of a world that high fantasy does not usually explore. Cruelty against children is portrayed here explicitly. It also introduces another facet of Kvothe's personality. At that moment, Kvothe is not concerned about what is right or wrong in terms of morality (as the following example will suggest), but instead about fighting the sense of impotence and appealing to survival as an excuse to assault his attackers to disable them. This notion of instinctual response is deeply in contrast with the idea of a hero, who is always fighting to defend society or a particular ethical

principle (as explored in Timmerman: 98). Here, Kvothe appears as a character that cares only for himself, a figure that is primarily concerned with his survival and with killing his enemies rather than just defeating them. Furthermore, the section is remembered viscerally, disembodying the figure of the different children and instead dismembering them in parts: first, he breaks one of the other boy's legs, then he breaks both arms, to finally crushing his head with the cobblestone. By describing it that way, Kvothe effectively separates the enemy in parts, and, as López Fernández argues, dehumanizes him (187).

The second passage demonstrates Kvothe's prioritization of Romantic ideals over rationality to decide over the fate of a mythical creature. After he feels kidnapped by Felurian, Kvothe and her engage in a fight in which Kvothe overcomes Felurian's powers:

I knew then that I could kill her. It would be as simple as throwing a sheet of paper to the wind. But the thought sickened me, and I was reminded of ripping the wings from a butterfly ... On the other hand, my safety and sanity were at stake ... But I couldn't kill her. Not like this. Not wielding my newfound magic like a dissecting knife. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 641-642)

Again, Kvothe appears as a reacting character who can overcome any challenge, whatever its nature. However, in this case, Kvothe seems to have developed a sense of moral value when considering whether to kill Felurian or not. That value, what he considers right, has to do with a universal order to which he draws attention, based on his observation of Felurian's body as desirable (641). Here Kvothe also raises an interesting point, differentiating between the semantics of science – “dissecting knife” (642)– and the semantics of beauty –“the wings from a butterfly” (641)–. The concept of beauty here is regarded as a moral value over science and is described as a natural element, related to feelings (“sickened” from erasing beauty). Here, feelings overcome rationalization and this hierarchy seems to be one of Kvothe's beliefs, hence connecting Beauty and the Sublime as part of the ethical construction of the character (Day: 27): Felurian, first regarded as a creature with

overflowing power (mainly derived from sexuality, as Kvothe notes) and both seen as terrifying and attracting is, when Kvothe is able to overcome her power, regarded as a beautiful butterfly that needs to be part of Kvothe's world in Kvothe's consideration. Thus, Beauty acquires an ideological value, a standard to be upheld.

One example of fantasy darkening can be found in the second book when Kvothe's actions suggest an interpretation of justice that easily resembles vengeance. While Kvothe is on one of his trips, he finds a group of fake troupers that had taken over an Edema Ruh Troupe caravan and kidnapped two women from a nearby town (848). After poisoning them, Kvothe hunts the fake troupers one by one:

Caesura leapt, caught the moonlight briefly on her blade, and tore his throat. He staggered to one knee, then toppled to his side, his hands staining black as they clutched his neck. I left him bleeding darkly in the moonlight, unable to cry out, dying but not dead. ... They shouted and cursed and begged for mercy as I stalked them through the forest ... It was a terrible night, but I found them all. There was no honor to it, no glory. But there was justice of a sort, and blood, and in the end I brought their bodies back. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 859-860)

This example shows perhaps one of the first times that Kvothe takes action without it being a reaction. Kvothe murders these people because he considers it to be something he needs to do, as suggested later when Kvothe explains that Ruh "have laws. Rules we follow" (863). Afterward, Kvothe tries to justify his actions by saying that he did it because they had killed the troupe and kidnapped two girls. However, he is proven wrong on the first of the two accusations. This failure in justifying himself may be the reason why Kvothe considers that night to be terrible, although that does not make him relinquish his marking of them as troupe killers. As will be stated in subsequent chapters, Kvothe also justifies this killing as part of his ethnic group's inner laws, according to which murdering a group of them is punished with death and a mark made with a hot hoof-like iron, leaving them at the curb, so other members of said ethnic group know what transpired there. This ritual

implies not only that it was Kvothe's will to do so, but also his duty as a member of his ethnic group, thus upholding a determined moral value, and, at the same time, succumbing to his desire for revenge.

In the fourth passage, Kvothe upholds a moral standard that is based on his social identity and is atypical to high fantasy. The morning after murdering the fake troupers, he and the two women he has saved from them find that the leader of the fake troupe is still alive:

“He’s dead,” I said coldly. “He just hasn’t stopped moving yet.” ... “Ruh bastard,” ... “Ruh don’t do what you did. Ruh don’t steal, don’t kidnap girls”. ... Alleg shook his head with a mocking smile. There was blood on his teeth. “Everyone knows what you people do”. ... Not sure if it was the right thing to do, I offered her the brand. ... Alleg didn’t seem to understand what was about to happen until she had the hot iron against his chest. He shrieked and twisted but lacked the strength to get away as she pressed it hard against him.... Alleg looked up at her and somehow managed to find his voice. “Ah girl, we had some good times, didn’t we?” She stopped crying and looked at him. “Don’t—” I kicked him sharply in the side before he could say anything else. (864-865)

Kvothe allows one of the kidnapped girls, Krin, to torture Alleg, helping her when he feels that it is his duty (864). What is more, Kvothe acknowledges that Alleg is dead, for he has already sentenced him. There is no room for mercy, proclaiming him deceased. Alleg's comments on the Ruh evidence the reason for this shift: Kvothe is adhering to a higher moral standard, considering his social identity as a critical defining term of his morality and identity, as will be seen in further chapters. However, there is still a spark of uncertainty in his narrative, in which, perhaps as a justification for his acts, probably as a real account of the described events, Kvothe does not acquire the role of the executioner, but instead offers it to one of the women that had been kidnapped by them (additionally, this same passage suggests some implied sexual harassment, rape, or abuse, which may be the cause why he allows her to torture them). A third plausible interpretation is that Kvothe considers that she also wants to exact revenge from Alleg, thus being undecided whether to satisfy

his own vengeance or, in a very twisted way, fulfill the desires of others, in both cases subverting the high fantasy moral standard towards an either dark fantasy dilemma (i.e. whether or not satisfying the desire of revenge through torture) or an anti-heroic, vigilante-like, perspective (i.e. helping the other in committing an act that does not adhere neither to the Western moral nor to the one implied in the book, insofar as they are parallel). Nevertheless, and since his reactions towards different ethical dilemmas are not always similar, by presenting this contrast, the reader engages with the narrative in questioning the reasoning behind said action. It is through this strangeness or infrequency that the reader is suggested to challenge the notion of morality, even imagining situations in which they would have acted similarly.

5. Conclusions

All in all, what this chapter has been trying to convey is that, by inverting the prototypical tropes of high fantasy, and adding more alloic elements to the storyworld, the narration reinforces the latter, producing new tropes that are empowered by the rationalization of the former. One of the most used techniques throughout the narration is to strengthen all the above principles by putting them to question. The University strikes as out-of-place regarding the technological level, and its relation towards the rest of the world is often put into question: “Servants brought the hot water, but it drained away through a series of pipes. I had not expected to find such conveniences so far from the civilizing influence of the University” (2011a: 375). This passage implies as much of the University as of the rest of Temerant concerning the technological level and popular superstition across the world. When exposed to sympathy for the first time, Denna reacts as follows: “Denna’s eyes went a little wide at this ... she’d probably never seen anything like this before ... someone could live mere miles from the University without ever having any exposure to ... basic sympathy” (148). Moreover, this institution aims to debunk the allós and codify the supernatural under its own scientific rules. When,

in *The Name of the Wind*, Kvothe tells Chronicler about the moment in which he finds a dragon, he then goes on to ask his audience about their opinion: “I’m giving you the opportunity to say something ... along the lines of ... ‘There’s no such thing as dragons...’” (2008: 545). However, the answer of Chronicler is of acceptance: “If you say you saw a dragon” (545). Kvothe argues that Chronicler is known to be an excellent student at the University, where he was called “Devan Lochees, *the great debunker*” (545, my emphasis), suggesting the aim of, at least, part of the University: provide knowledge to pragmatize the allós. Denna’s reaction, however, is praying: “Tehlu hold and overroll us. It’s a dragon.” (546). The following few sentences suggest the difference between the University world and the non-University world: outside the University, the allós overcomes the pragmatikós, whereas, inside the University, students try to debunk said myths. In pragmatizing the allós, the statements mentioned above against religion that both Kvothe and Bast have done are reinforced (see page 23), and the narration suggests that Kvothe and the University despise religion due to over-simplification and relying on false knowledge. Even the sole religious figure that appears in a complex light, Trapis, seems to Kvothe as a strange character:

Was Trapis a Tehlin priest? His robe was tattered and dirty, but it might have been the proper grey long ago. Parts of his story had been awkward and stumbling, but some were stately and grand, as if he had been reciting them from some half-forgotten memory. Of sermons? Of his readings from the Book of the Path? I never asked. And though I stopped by his basement frequently in the months that followed, I never heard Trapis tell another story again. (164-165)

Finally, while the main character shapes the world with his decisions, he is usually posed as a passive figure forced to decide rather than the opposite. When he takes action, therefore, the narrative is strengthened both in darkness and in providing the moral code by which Kvothe leads his activities, as chapters 131 to 135 suggest (2011a: 857-887), from the killing of the fake troupers to guiding the kidnapped women to their town.

The core novels, despite being the ones that most adheres to the definition of high dark fantasy that has been provided earlier in comparison to the novella and the short stories, do so in a unusual way, using a technique similar to the Rhetoric of Negation (i.e. by negating the described object to reinforce the idea of something that has not been seen earlier), but applying a negation of the typical tropes to strengthen the differences that make the storyworld an entity by itself.

Chapter 2: Identity and Cognitive Semiotics

Come now, I am Kvothe. I am Edema Ruh born. I have studied at the University and can call down lightning like Taborlin the Great. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 697)

1. Introduction

This chapter proposes that cognitive semiotics affects a reading tendency in which the narrator implies epistemological knowledge regarding identity, based on the theories that will appear here. Thus, this chapter will feature a review and clarification of cognitive semiotics, Identity theory, and the theory of the Semiotic Self (Wiley) that will be applied to *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. As such, this will enable the study of how the narrative suggests that subjects build their identity as a cohesive text that aims to highlight the differences between them, both as a group and as particular subjects.

2. Cognitive Semiotics

Cognitive Semiotics is a tool that serves as a bridge between different subjects, and at the same time, configures their self-representation since the latter is a discourse (Zlatev: n/p). Cognitive semiotics focuses on what a subject interprets from a given narrative (in this case, the narrative of the self). It is a relatively new approach, studies starting in the late 1980s, and it is a field that is still developing (n/p). There are several aspects of Cognitive Semiotics that should be clarified when defining one's approach to this social discipline.

This discipline “can be defined as an interdisciplinary matrix of (sub parts of) disciplines and methods, focused on the multifaceted phenomenon of meaning” (n/p) that studies the relationship between symbol (a sociocultural sign) and

meaning in all its possible facets, including not only language by itself, but also perception and thought (n/p). The concept symbol refers to the linguistically processed meaning –as Xu et al. argue when talking about symbolic gestures (n/p)–, whereas meaning would refer to the epistemological knowledge that the subject acquires (Zlatev: n/p). It is important to note that epistemological here does not mean correct, but instead valid insofar as it provides meaning to the cognitive subject. This interaction between symbol and meaning is studied through different approaches, including anthropology, psychology, and literary discourse analysis. In so doing, this cognitive approach uses both theory and empirical research to explain “higher-order concepts such as *meaning, sign use, representation, language, intersubjectivity, etc.*” (n/p, emphasis in the original) in terms that are not universal but rather supported by chronotopic elements.

First, as Zlatev argues and revises in “What is Cognitive Semiotics?”, its methodology has its foundations on three main axes (n/p). These include: “(a) to acknowledge the validity of all methods within their respective domain of inquiry, (b) to acknowledge the epistemological priority of first- and second-person methods in the study of meaning ... and (c) to integrate the three kinds of methods [using first, second, and third-person statements when narrating a story]” (n/p). In so doing, Cognitive Semiotics aims to produce a Western theory of meaning where the two methods above are privileged over the third-person one, that is, Cognitive Semiotics focuses mostly on the interaction between the self and the object. *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, in fact, does the same: while not forgetting the third person relationship with the world (i.e., the narrator from the interludes, for instance), its focus is on Kvothe and his relationship with himself, as well as his way of telling the story to the other. When stating for the first time the self-narrative of his identity, Kvothe tries to find its beginning, both for himself - “In some ways, it began when I heard her singing ... No. It began at the University. I went to learn magic of the sort they talk about in stories ... But I expect the true beginning lies in what led me to the University ... Yes. I suppose that is where it all begins” (Rothfuss, 2008: 52), as for his narratees: “But what would my father say if he heard me telling a story

this way? ‘Begin at the beginning.’ Very well, if we are to have a telling, let’s make it a proper one” (52). The former suggests a self-interaction, where he aims to convey meaning from all the epistemological value he has stored in his memory (i.e. tries to symbolize his experience), whereas the latter seems to imply a concern about the people who are receiving the narrative, i.e., the narratees¹⁰.

The question arises when asking how subjects acquire meaning. To this, Peircean epistemology, which will be applied here only in its semiotic aspect, rather than implying any empirical realism, argues that social interaction between subject and object establishes meaning, and that meaning does not exist by itself, and therefore individual processing is socially constructed (Fabbrichesi and Marietti: xi). Knowledge and meaning are, essentially, socially constructed narratives. Such an idea also appears in the core novels. When drunk with his friends, Kvothe tells a story that “is different. It’s one we tell each other ... [t]o help us remember. To teach us ... things” (Rothfuss, 2011: 286). That explicitly suggests that stories, narrative acts, are at the core of knowledge and rationalizing epistemological input, which implies a dialogical exchange between the narrator and the narratee –the narrator tells the story in exchange of the narratee’s attention made patent to the narrator: when telling a story, for instance, one of the narratees “laughed in places, gasped in others” (536) thus being defined as “the perfect audience” (536).

Another feature of cognitive semiotics has as its core is its necessity to adapt to its spatiotemporal situation: “CS studies meaning on all levels –from perception to language, along with the various forms of ‘external’, cultural representations (theatre, music, pictures, film, etc.)– primarily as dynamic *processes* rather than static *products*” (Zlatev: n/p, emphases in the original). Zlatev’s exploration favors the idea of the tendencies previously explained: meaning in a particular reading (i.e., a socially meaningful text, an interpretation) is not something neither permanent nor unique, but rather subject to the circumstances of its creations.

¹⁰ For more on narratees, Cf. Herman, 2009a.

While, in literature, the literary work lives on, texts are continually revised and rewritten to update the reader's information about the primary source. *The Kingkiller Chronicle* argues for this at the beginning, when Chronicler makes clear that he wants to collect Kvothe's story, he tells the rumors he has been hearing, to which Kote does not react well: "What can any of them know about me? ... What can they know about any of this?" (Rothfuss, 2008: 46), to which Chronicler answers that "Only what they're told" (46). By implying that there are multiple ways of telling a story, the book reflects on the very nature of the communicative act: in this sense, Kvothe's story can be both expressed and interpreted in many ways, depending exclusively on how the story is told and how the reader receives it. That is why Chronicler tries to appeal to Kvothe by telling him that if he wrote the account, he "would tell the truth" (46). Chronicler attempts to lure Kvothe to tell his story by appealing to something that both consider to be a valid schema, the notion of truth: the account of Chronicler would be the truth because it would adhere as much as possible to Kvothe's testimony, which is the only witness of what happened internally to past-time Kvothe.

Yet this assumption is invalidated by the previous one, since if people know what they are told, and memory (or rather, memory recalling) is primarily fictional, insofar as it can be considered a present account of past events to which the emitter has already given a meaning and categorized within a particular schema –according to the SEM@S collective, "Memory is unconscious of its continuous deformation and is susceptible to manipulation" (3), and, in Childs' view, "A memory is not a fragment, not a reflection, not an unmediated re-collection of sensory perception, but it might be understood in terms of the play on experience or thought of imagination, which itself moulds information and experience to compose something unique in the individual's mind" (63)–, then the truth that Chronicler promises is, to at least a minimum extent, partly fictional, and only provided that Kvothe strictly adheres to his memory, and his memory is as good as he states it is (Rothfuss, 2011a: 664). However, it is also noticeable that throughout the same passage in which Chronicler mentions the truth, Kvothe notes that "the best lies

about [himself] are the ones [*he*] told” (2008: 45, emphasis in the original). With all this, the narrative dialogues with the reader and suggests that the communicative act relies on performative’s principle of validity, comprising anything that, at least the reader, finds adequate given their sociocultural values. Some examples of narratives that a reader may regard as valid in the Western world are narratives which the reader considers to be suitable according to the laws of physics, the sociocultural context, or their moral (within a spectrum of good-neutral-bad) – rather than any substantial truth that is inherent to a story¹¹.

It is crucial to acknowledge Cognitive Semiotics’ limitations as well, instead of pronouncing universal cognitive rules. In this sense, this approach to Cognitive Semiotics should not be considered deterministic, and instead, relying on the notion of tendency, regarded as a theory with chronotopic value, (as *The Kingkiller Chronicle* also hints), meaning not universal, but subject to a specific space and time. It can be seen in Kvothe’s game when pronouncing himself reliable and unreliable at the same time (Rothfuss, 2008: 45, for instance), suggesting a multiplicity of truths regarding his self-discourse. By doing so, the narrator implies that there are not “versions” of the same story, but instead that the subjects’ epistemological knowledge relies solely upon what they perceive (that is, what they have been told). The fact that different narrators within *The Kingkiller Chronicle* present similar events differently further reinforces this. One of the most prominent examples is Kvothe’s first introduction of his loving interest, Denna. While he tries to describe her, and not finding the words, but “all I could think was, beautiful. Beautiful” (381), Bast, one of the listeners of the story, mentions that she and he met once, so he could try to describe her. Instead of following with Kvothe’s account of her being “unlike anyone [he] ha[s] ever known” (383), Bast defines her as having a “nose [that] was a little crooked. And if we’re being honest here, her face was a little narrow for my taste. She wasn’t a perfect beauty by any means” (383). However, Kvothe keeps siding with his view, trying to define her by applying

¹¹ For more on validity, see Austin.

the rhetoric of negation, thus implying a rejection of stated facts (383-384). With this, the narration suggests the reader that Kvothe's account is biased and reflects on its unreliability. By not knowing whose narrative is the most reliable of both, the reader is forced to choose between two sources, and siding either with Bast or with Kvothe on this topic.

It is interesting to note that this last example also makes a point against over-sexualization and over-description of female bodies in several mainstream contemporary narratives of fantasy in general –such as Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* starting in 1996, as suggested in several chapters within Gjelsvik and Schubart (editors), or the last installments of the *Final Fantasy* Franchise -mainly, *FF XIII* (2009), Noel Davis suggests (n/p)–: by overtly arguing over it, the narrative focuses in said descriptions, and suggests the reader do the same and reflect on the sort of portraits that have appeared throughout Kvothe's narrative -“All the women in your story are beautiful” (Rothfuss, 2008: 383)- and comparing them to the men's descriptions he has been doing –“be a fullblooded Ceald, with the characteristic ruddy complexion and dark hair and eyes ... his voice thick with the harsh burr a Siaru accent makes” (226). The reader is suggested to look back and consider the embodiment that female characters have had throughout the book. Although not providing a definite position about this, the narrative suggests a re-thinking of both the narrative itself and the genre by extension.

3. Identity

The definition that this research will use for Identity has its foundation on Zima's perception of identity: Identity is a discourse that a subject creates to differentiate from other subjects (Zima: 1-10). Mainly, identities can be categorized into two different discourses: the social identity and the personal identity, the latter contained in the former (as argued in Turner et al.: 3-4). Social identity is, at least for this research, the narrative of a specific social group. Tajfel and Turner argue

that these groups are “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 of it” (40). The process of constructing these groups consists of three stages, primarily developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, and summarized very clearly by McLeod: “The first is ‘categorization’. We categorize objects to understand them and identify them. In a very similar way we categorize people (including ourselves) to understand the social environment” (McLeod: n/p, emphasis in the original). In so doing, individuals also find references to which they feel more attached, such as “behaviors ... [and] norms” (n/p). The second stage is called Social Identification, which is a process through which individuals start to create bonds towards the social group to which they feel they belong: “There will be an emotional significance to [one’s] identification with a group, and [the individual’s] self-esteem will become bound up with group membership” (n/p). The third stage is called Social comparison, in which individuals focus on the differences between their social group and the rest (n/p). McLeod considers this as the most important factor to understand prejudice, such as racism or classism: he argues that “once two groups identify themselves as rivals, they are forced to compete for the members to maintain their self-esteem. Competition and hostility between groups is thus not only a matter of competing for resources... but also the result of competing identities” (n/p). This factor suggests that, while identity is built as a method to differentiate subjects, social identity enables them to categorize, bond, and group to produce a collective differentiation of individuals that do not share their common narrative. In short, “the basic and highly reliable finding is that the trivial, ad hoc intergroup categorization leads to in-group favoritism and discrimination against the out-group” (Tajfel and Turner: 39). This quotation seems crucial for understanding how social identity appears depicted in the storyworld.

Kvothe starts his story by identifying himself within a social and ethnic group, the Edema Ruh, a nomadic trouper group: “Before we begin, you must

remember that I am of the Edema Ruh. We were telling stories before Caluptena burned. Before there were books to write in. Before there was music to play. When the first fire kindled, we Ruh were there spinning stories in the circle of its flickering light” (Rothfuss, 2008: 51). From here, one can also infer a strong bond between Kvothe and his social and ethnical origins, shaped in the form of pride. He also gives another account of the Edema to his friends at the University, however, dispelling the previous self-narrative of his social status: “‘We’re just people really,’ I said eventually. ‘Except we don’t stay in one place very long, and everyone hates us.’” (2011a: 274). This dispelling highlights the different approaches subjects may take regarding their social identity: while stating what the Ruh are to a certain audience (that is, Chronicler, Bast, and the potential reader of the Chronicle) is differently explained when trying to socially differentiate the Edema than when he is among his friends and wants to bond with them.

At the beginning of Kvothe’s narrative, then, the Edema Ruh are an ethnic group that does not necessarily share biological traits. Anyone who learns and adopts their way of life can be an Edema Ruh. Thus, the connection between them is cultural rather than biological. Implicitly, the Edema value more their cultural bonds than any other, such as an economic or a racial bond. Being, as they are, nomadic gatherers of stories, they always welcome anyone able to tell them new stories and are somehow related to the show business. Initially, however, the Ruh seem to have shared certain racial traits: at a certain point of the narrative, Kvothe tells a story that Ruh have passed on for generations in which an old beggar reaches, after much effort, a troupe of Edema Ruh. When they welcome him, the beggar says that “My blood is not yours. I am not a part of your family” (285). Moreover, Kvothe, at certain moments, makes some references to him having “Edema blood” (498), and, when he finds a group of what he considers unqualified troupers, he observes that “they could hardly be blamed for their lack of Ruh blood” (706). Also, at times prior to the narration, it seems that this group was being hunted down during a purge of beggars and road travelers: “But the Edema were especially prized. They hunted us like foxes. For a hundred years Ruh-hunt was a favorite

pastime among the Aturan upper crust” (287), effectively suggesting specific common characteristics that made them distinguishable from other troupers, apart from their skills.

The Edema Ruh are systematically discriminated against, which is made patent throughout the whole of the core novels. Paralleling the linguistic discrimination techniques that are found in the referential world -“Obvious Bigotry ... Color Symbolism ... Ethnocentrism ... Passive Tense ... Political Terminology ... Loaded Words ... Qualifying Adjectives ... Speaking English” (Philmorbru: n/p)-, there are terms such as Ravel, “a term my people find particularly offensive. Its use makes light of the systematic slaughter of thousands of Ruh” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 90), thieving or bastard sometimes associated with the word “Ruh”, as seen in “Ruh bastard” (864), and in “thieving Ruh” (259), for instance. Alternatively, the occupations that are pleasant to nobility (i.e., trouping) appear without the origin of the troupers being relevant. They are also considered liars, beggars, rapists, and bandits systematically: “Who in their right mind would try to pass themselves off as Edema Ruh? ... Who can tell the difference between bandits and a band of Ruh?” (920-921), says the ruler of one of the most prosperous cities in Temerant.

Furthermore, as if it is a way of including them within society, some nobles, such as Baron Greyfallow, have at least one group of Edema Ruh troupers (as seen in 2011a: 98). At the same time, for common people, being part of the Ruh is not socially acceptable for the majority of Temerant: “We are strangers everywhere. Many folk view us as vagabonds and beggars, while others deem us little more than thieves, heretics, and whores” (2008: 58). This sort of generalization also appears to diminish their cultural significance, being directly associated with a profession, effectively reducing their cultural existence to a synonym of the word performer: “Contrary to popular belief, not all traveling performers are of the Ruh. My troupe was not some poor batch of mummers, japing at crossroads for pennies, singing for our suppers. We were court performers” (54). These linguistic and cultural forms of discrimination serve the purpose of providing the Ruh with “non-human and unappealing traits that are the conceptual backbone of the enemy’s iconicity”

(López Fernández: 187, my translation), that is, that the Ruh are clearly differentiated from the rest of the society and considered the “enemy” from a cultural point of view, due perhaps to their nomadic and strange (for the rest of Temerant’s society) way of living.

This account that Kvothe gives on Edema Ruh suggests pride as well. According to Wrenn, rejection is also a source of bonding, using pride as the way this bond is projected: “Rejection confirms for independent people what they already feel about themselves, that they’re not like others. For people who already feel separate from the crowd, social rejection can be a form of validation - that distinction is a positive one leading them to greater creativity” (Wrenn: n/p). This sense of rejection gives Kvothe the social position he thinks he needs to justify his way of telling the story. Moreover, although he argues for his own self, what these techniques do is to effectively link the Edema Ruh to particular opinions of the narrator that seem common within the social group, for example, the pride of being part of a marginalized group. That appears, for instance, in the ways that Arliden, Kvothe’s father, acts, as well as how Laurian, his mother, does: while the former is Edema by birth, the latter rejects her nobility status to become part of the socio-cultural group (Rothfuss 2008: 54). In so doing, she rejects her status as noble to become part of the Edema. By dismissing the nobility status, Laurian is both socially isolated and able to focus on her performing skills. Kvothe considers that she should be proud of her decision since it has allowed her to devote her life to trouping. By rejecting social convention, thus, she is validated as a subject.

As for Kvothe, he makes his social identity explicit and vital within the narrative, even to the point to argue that his identity is as powerful as any other non-referential identity within the narrated world, e.g., the Fae. When dealing with Felurian, the Fae, he feels that he can overcome Felurian’s powers in everything related to storytelling: “Felurian was not the narrative treasure trove you would think. Powerful and clever? Certainly. Energetic and lovely? Absolutely. But storytelling was not among her many gifts. I, on the other hand, was of the Edema Ruh, and we know all the stories in the world” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 652). With that

overcoming of supernatural creatures, Kvothe is achieving a twofold goal: to subvert the mainstream considerations on the Edema of them being beggars and thieves by putting them in a position of power and suggesting the idea that they are better in performing than any other imaginable subject.

Within the Edema Ruh, however, their views and manners are drastically different, both on their bonds and on their way to deal with others. They greet everyone, as Kvothe does throughout the whole chronicle, exchanging songs for information and vice versa, and what is more important, they include anyone they consider potentially part of them: “We Ruh decide who is a part of our family and who is not. You belong with us. Look around and see if I am lying” (285). With this, the narrative suggests that the cultural bond between Ruh is more important than any other aspect for them. At the same time, this reinforces the idea of rejection as a source of bonding: by authoritatively clarifying to someone what a Ruh is and what is not, the Ruh can overcome the oppression that is exerted over them.

As Kvothe states, living as the Edema Ruh do, hated by society, forces a strong bond between their members, even developing their own semiotic symbols. When murdering the fake troupers, Kvothe also uses a hot iron to brand a broken circle on all of them. Krin, one of the two kidnapped girls, asks him why he does that, and he goes on to explain that “All of the Edema Ruh are one family ... Like a *closed circle*. It doesn’t matter if some of us are strangers to others, we are still family, still close. We have to be this way, because we are always strangers wherever we go. We are scattered, and people hate us” (863, my emphasis). Furthermore, they even develop their own law code as a response to being marginalized by Temerant’s society: “We have laws. Rules we follow. When one of us does a thing that cannot be forgiven or mended, if he jeopardizes the safety or the honor of the Edema Ruh, he is killed and branded with the broken circle to show he is no longer one of us” (863). This creation of their own symbols and laws argues for a non-representation of their kin in Temerant’s different legal systems, and

instead, suggesting that the Ruh create their rules due to that disbelief in the system, regarded by them as systemically oppressive¹².

The second sort of identity is personal identity. Personal identity can be defined as a personal discourse that serves to provide meaning both to the inner cognitive processes of an individual and their relation towards the epistemology they can grasp (as suggested in Dobson: n/p). This personal identity, at the same time, can be divided in two: the identity that any individual constructs about themselves, and the identity that other individuals attribute to a specific, chronotopic individual (n/p). It is noteworthy that personal identity is, therefore, one of the most mutable epistemological discourses, since both the self-interpretation and the interpretation that others have over an individual are bound to the certain chronotopic elements that the reader (internal and external) grasp as means to construct the target's identity. According to Berzonsky, personal identity is built in mainly three different processing styles, depending on what they value as “their sense of identity: (a) personal identity attributes ... (b) social identity components ... and (c) collective identity elements such as ‘religion’ and ‘family’” (2012: 63). These three processing styles, Berzonsky argues, do not pursue the truth behind a self, but rather their sense of validity to the individual –i.e. what the identity's embodiment “*think* they are and what they *think* they want” (57, emphasis in the original)–. This sense of self-knowledge connects to a notion of practicality, where there is no room for implausible identities:

Given a person's biological potential and the environmental contexts within which he or she live ... people cannot arbitrarily create any viable identity they choose. The perception and understanding of information from reality (i.e., social, cultural, and physical contexts) is filtered through people's theoretical constructs and identity structure, which in turn influence what information they attend to and encode and how this information is interpreted. (57)

¹² For more on systemic oppression, Cf. Owen.

This is especially interesting for Temerant, where the narrative voice shapes what the reader knows about the world and whatnot, as it is conveying a Storyworld that, although connected to many others regarding their being high dark fantasy environments, does not appear anywhere else. Therefore, potentially, any identity is viable within a fantasy setting if the reader can see the viability of it (i.e., if the narratology supports the narrative). When discussing *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, the reader is subtly suggested to accept that Kvothe's self-proclaimed identity is the one to which they must refer, since it is the only self-account that they find within the literary work.

These two discourses, personal and social identity, frequently different, represent two different facets of any individual: one that is a self-theory, "an implicit theory of oneself" (56), a theory constructed cognitively that contains "a loosely organized system of personal constructs, assumptions, hypotheses, beliefs, schemas, and postulates relevant to the self-interacting in the world" (Berzonsky: 56), as well as "a core of values, standards, epistemological assumptions, goals, and ideals that serve as criteria for monitoring and evaluating the predictive and practical usefulness of efforts to cope with and adapt to the demands and problems encountered in the process of daily life" (56) on the one hand, and the cognitively processed discourse that others have about a specific individual, including what they believe to be all the previously explained elements, on the other.

Kvothe makes, throughout the whole core novels, a self-theory of himself, justifying his actions regarding a particular moral standard and giving a testimonial account of certain events that have been associated with him, explaining what happened from his point of view, to provide a more or less objective statement of said events. This may be controversial for the reader but serves the purpose of presenting the reader with different accounts of the alleged facts. The Chronicle offers the reader at least three different identity discourses for the main character: Kvothe being called a *Kingkiller* (Rothfuss, 2008: 53); Kvothe being called the new Taborlin the Great (456), a good-willed legendary wizard from the storyworld (4); and Kote, the Waystone Inn's owner, powerless and inane (15).

It is interesting to note that the identitarian processes that the outside figure of Kvothe endures are different from Kvothe's own perception of the self, the inside figure of Kvothe, the former focusing on their deeds rather than in anything else. Old Cob, one of the patrons of the Waystone Inn, when telling the story of the legendary Kvothe, discusses the facts that explain Kvothe's nicknames (627-628). This building of a story to explain his nicknames suggests a clear connection between discourse and the "felicitous" requirement of quality, that is, that stories respond to an ontology that not only is valid, but true¹³. At the same time, however, by suggesting falseness in a high percentage of the stories that characters tell throughout the novel, the reading posits the question of what lies under a story, i.e., whether stories have or not a universal ontological value, without offering a clear answer to it. Through its narratological processes, thus, identity processes are put to question, by suggesting that the identity discourse based in facts (that is, the deed discourse, which reduces individuals to what they have done) is subject to social interpretation and validation/reprobation. Going back to the first statement of his self-narrating his identity, Kvothe states that the narrative is going to be "resembling my book of deeds" (54). To begin the story, Kvothe says, the reader must trace back to "the heart of who I truly am" (54). For Kvothe, then, his deeds are the outcome of his way of thinking, while, at the same time, to self-justify himself, he draws attention to said deeds: "I was Kvothe the trouper, Edema Ruh born. I was Kvothe the student, Re'lar under Elodin. I was Kvothe the musician" (2011a: 640). Save his origins, to which he frequently refers, as seen above, any other self-theorization has its foundation on the outcome of his thoughts and circumstances, his deeds. As such, the narration explores two ways through which identity can be constructed: while for external audiences, Kvothe appears as a set of connected actions, Kvothe's self-theory suggests that such actions are, in essence, justified by what he considers to be his true self. In other words, while both identity construction processes go

¹³ For more on felicitousness, Cf. Austin.

through Kvothe's deeds, the external observer considers said acts as the backbone of his self, whereas Kvothe considers them the outcome of his being.

4. *The Semiotic Self*¹⁴

If identity is essentially a rationalized discourse that can be understood by the self, the question that arises now is what would be the semiotic self, i.e., what self-identity is for other subjects and how does each self transmit their information (as defined in Wiley)¹⁵. Certain chronotopic elements bind identity, such as “parents, peers ... formal schooling, instruction and other sorts of cultural and social transmission; as well as ... direct observation and experience” (Berzonsky: 57). At the same time, these elements are being assessed by the self and considered either valid or invalid, as research indicates that subjects usually “play a role in constructing both a sense who they think they are and the ‘reality’ within which they live” (57).

Identity is communicated to others through a variety of signs, usually done to imply changes in it: Pollock argues that masking is “a technique for transforming identity, either through the modification of the representation of identity, or through temporary ... extinction of identity” (582) that requires a “wilful suspension of disbelief among *performers* and audience” (592, my emphasis). Masking will be especially interesting when studying Kvothe's identity discourse through the narrative elements that form it. For instance, Kvothe is allegedly hiding (i.e. making disappear) his self-identity under the mask of Kote, the innkeeper from the Stoneway Inn in Newarre, as the third person narrative voice suggests, for instance, when mentioning that he is a man “who called himself Kote” (Rothfuss, 2008: 15).

¹⁴ The term is borrowed from Wiley, as will be developed throughout this part of the chapter.

¹⁵ This is not to say that the self is a discourse, but rather that its rationalization and transformation in semiotic symbols is what is being called “identity”.

When Graham, the carpenter of Newarre, complains about age and Kvothe agrees with him, he answers that Kvothe seems old, “Except you’re not old, are you? I forget that most times ...I mean, you move around old, and you talk old, but you’re not, are you? I’ll bet you’re half my age.” (2011a: 9). This makes Graham feel confused, mainly not understanding the reason why Kvothe acts like an older person. To try to solve that conflict, “He squint[s] at the innkeeper [and asks] ‘How old are you, anyway?’” (9). Kvothe acknowledges Graham’s conflict (as well as his: he feels old, but he knows he is not that old) and masks his identity discourse, answering that he is “Old enough to feel old” (9). Graham then assesses the claim and regards it as invalid, rejecting Kvothe’s mask: “Too young to make old man noises ... Leave us old folk to complain about how the world is getting all loose in the joints” (9). This episode does not only suggest to the reader that masking and lying are two resources that Kvothe often uses, but also that dialogical situations are what create chronicles and discourses, which is to say that mythical Kvothe may be a mask provoked by the exchange that Chronicler and Kote shared before.

However, and albeit identity is an ever-changing discourse, as seen before, there is a certain sense of immanency in the identity discourse, as there is in every text the self can produce and store in their memory. Moreover,

Having the cognitive resources to represent the past, and then use transformations of those representations to anticipate the future, enables people to transcend time and maintain a sense of themselves as persistent volitional agents who think, doubt, will, act, desire, and self-regulate. (Berzonsky: 56)

That immanency allows the subject to establish a notion of self that is integrated and textualized: although the subject’s chronotopic surroundings change, they can incorporate the new ones in the same self-discourse, inputting a new text that overcomes the previous one but is still regarded as the same category. Thus, new epistemological input implies new texts that the self, through the critic’s cognitive function, can relate to each other and keep the self as a durable entity. *The Kingkiller Chronicle* implies this by mentioning that Kvothe is angry about the lack of truth

of the accounts he has been hearing. He suggests that no one knows what happened (Rothfuss, 2008: 45). This sense of knowledge is what allows Kvothe to state that he is the Kvothe of the stories. He knows what happened, because he lived it, and therefore knows about Kvothe's identity¹⁶.

However, not every self organizes their identity (i.e., their identitarian discourse) in the same way. According to Berzonsky, from the three different orientations that appear when self-theorizing that would be able to roughly define the most prominent ways to produce a discourse for others, insofar as Western identity self-discourses go, the first one would be the "informational processing orientation" (57). This sort of individuals "deliberately seek out, process, and evaluate identity-relevant information" (58) to produce an established and organized self-theory that can assess how relevant is a fact as an identity-building element. This sort of orientation will be the most important in the core novels, the primary example of this being Kvothe. When deciding how to organize his story (i.e., his identity-building processes, from Kvothe the legend to Kote, the innkeeper), he starts by saying this:

In some ways, it began when I heard her singing. ... No. It began at the University. I went to learn magic of the sort they talk about in stories ... Yes. I suppose that is where it all begins. This is, in many ways, a story about the Chandrian ... But I suppose I must go even further back than that. If this is to be something resembling my book of deeds, I can spare the time. ... In the beginning, as far as I know, the world was spun out ... Let us hurry forward to the only tale of any real importance ... Mine. (Rothfuss, 2008: 52)

¹⁶ Worth of mention here is the idea that epistemological knowledge is *valid*, not true, and that the fact that his knowledge is valid for chronicler has to do more with Chronicler's sense of validity in regards to Kvothe's account rather than the truth behind his words, especially since Kvothe, throughout the novel, states, both for the "historical aspect" of the chronicle and for his account to Chronicler (i.e. the narratological aspect), that he is a magnificent actor, well versed in lying.

Kvothe here is organizing the events that had led him to what he is now (i.e., establishing his identity) by regarding and disregarding some aspects as necessary to know for his discourse. The narratee does not need to know about Temerant's cosmogony (as suggested in 52-53) but needs to see the motivation behind Kvothe's actions (Kvothe implies), thus, indicating that there is a specific motivation behind them (that is, the Chandrian). However, he needs to correct himself twice before realizing this, allegedly aiming to state the most identity-relevant information.

As Bakker argues, the semiotic self-theory presents “a view of the self where the semiotics of symbols and habits is taken [from] Performance studies” (Bakker: 10) to a theory that “yields ... three constitutive elements: qualities (Firstness), existents (Secondness), and mediation (Thirdness)” (Michel & Andacht: 820). These three elements, sustained in a dialogical process, are used in Semiotic Self Theory to study the development of the self. *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, regarded as a biographical intradiegetic narrative set in a high dark fantasy setting, helps to illustrate this: the self-theory is described as a conversation between Chronicler and Kvothe, or rather, as a monologue that Kvothe addresses to his narratees, Bast and Chronicler¹⁷. Thus, in explaining and describing his life, Kvothe is effectively performing them. The fact that the narrative needs to include elements of the intradiegetic world to distance the reader's world from Kvothe's further reinforces said performativity: since the reader's primary epistemological source of knowledge is the narrative itself, anything Kvothe says is presented as valid, implying that World-building is done through the narrative, even when not describing, to the reader. Therefore, his qualities and his existents are made patent through the mediation (which at the same time, is made existent by its appearance) between the reader and Kvothe.

¹⁷ For more on intradiegetic, as well as related terminology, Cf. Genette: 188–89.

5. Identity in Literary Characters

It goes without question that *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is both a fictional and literary work. As such, it is a narrative that is not subject to further development, and instead, is presented as rather static, given these narratives' storage medium. In such a way, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* asks the reader to what extent literary works are able to reflect on identity processes outside their literacy, where mutating is constant and an ongoing process. The suggestion the *Chronicle* implies is that identity within literary works can be regarded as mimetic if readers understand that Kvothe's identity-building processes are static both in time and space, a snapshot reflecting on identity processes. It is a static revisiting of the facts, basing his identity on memory processes that, accurate or inaccurate as they may be, are not going to be revisited once the literary work is over. The main trilogy presents the identity processes that the character develops, but this self-revision will have as its main trait that is static, opposite to non-fictional, living people. As such, it acknowledges its limitations and makes them part of this debate with the reader: by posing a self-reflected fictional revisiting and, in trying to reflect the dynamics of identity as a non-static process, adding different accounts to the same facts that more usually than not contradict Kvothe's version, the book effectively suggests the movable structure of identity grasping while presenting a static cultural product that reflects on how identity is built in our world.

While individual and collective identity of subjects outside literature may be seen as a discourse built through the webbing of different perspectives and inputs (as suggested earlier in Dobson: n/p), it is essential to remember that, in narrative, these "individuals" (if so they may be called) are textually connected to readers without them having any physical appearance apart from the collection of narratives that readers can access. The narrative voice, then, shapes these narratives to suggest some aspects about them. Unless otherwise stated, through a process of mimesis, readers tend to imagine characters supported by the clues they find in their texts.

The Kingkiller Chronicle highlights these ideas by providing different accounts of the same story. The various epithets that others attribute to Kvothe, which usually refer to his deeds, are differently interpreted depending on subjective visions of it from different characters. It is their way to codify determined identity characteristics that produce an interpretation of the object. This sort of discursive epistemology appears reflected in the book, and argued in favor, in the way to which Kote's patrons refer to the impossibility of him being the legendary Kvothe. When Aaron, the smith's apprentice is about to enlist the army to fight in a civil war for the Penitent King, Kote tries to prevent that by telling him that he is Kvothe, the legendary figure and that if he stays, he will be able to know how the ongoing war started, and therefore, not join the war. To do so, Kote first asks Aaron about Kvothe:

Aside from dead? ... He knew all sorts of secret magics ... He knew six words he could whisper in a horse's ear that would make it run a hundred miles. He could turn iron into gold and catch lightning in a quart jar to save it for later. He knew a song that would open any lock, and he could stave in a strong oak door with just one hand ... It all depends on the story, really. Sometimes he's the good guy ... but in other stories he's a right bastard ... He stole secret magics from the University ... And they didn't call him Kvothe Kingkiller because he was good with a lute".
(Rothfuss, 2011a: 19)

The narration defines this mythical Kvothe regarding his deeds and nothing else. Aaron here makes a clear point: that Kvothe cannot be alive, something that Kote will note later. His account of him being dead suggests that Aaron differentiates between legendary figures (even when they appear as morally-grey, rather than heroes) and humankind. Aaron sees Kvothe as a figure that lies between reality and fictional narrative, much like the figures of the Arthurian cycle.

In Aaron's narrative, Kvothe possesses superhuman qualities, such as possessing alchemical powers or supernatural animal taming skills that are mythical (part of the *allós*) in *Temerant*, as suggested in the previous quotation. And even when considering the moral standard of the mythical Kvothe's actions, there is no

middle ground: either he is “the good guy” (19) or “a rightful bastard” (19). This radicalization on Kvothe’s assessment also makes it easier for the characters to consider him story material: His identity, his being a subject with a readable discourse, is drifted, within every story, to one of the two poles of morality, evading any moral ambiguity. This use of a narratological technique (i.e. making the figure of the hero/villain clear for the narrate) contrasted to the testimony that the reader has been reading throughout the whole *Chronicle* (that is, Kvothe is allegedly still alive and telling his story), suggests a consideration of identity for characters as a finished product, wrapped after the narration has ended and, perhaps, reopened if a new narration that includes the same character arrives. Moreover, by stating two different ways to regard the mythical Kvothe and presenting characters that do not know what to think of them, since “it all depends on the story” (19), the reader is cued to consider the difference between a narrative product (that is, the mythical Kvothe) and a living entity (that is, the Kvothe that is telling the story). Furthermore, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is also a fictional narrative (and thus, subject to the same rules that it has suggested previously). That oxymoron highlights this issue and brings to light what has been already intuited: Fictional identities are closed discourses, that may or may not suffer changes throughout the narrative, much like mythical or dead people in the reader’s referential world, but while a narrative is still ongoing, readers do not tend to perceive them closed.

Kote acknowledges that Aaron is focusing on Kvothe’s deeds, that is, focusing on Kvothe as a collection of acts, rather than a single discourse, and asks him again what Aaron knows about Kvothe, suggesting binding Aaron’s knowledge in a cohesive structure: “He had red hair ... All the stories say that. A right devil with a sword. He was terrible clever. Had a real silver tongue, too, could talk his way out of anything” (19-20). Aaron leaves the stories behind and, instead, connects every common thread among them, that is, produces a discourse of what Kvothe is in general terms from the different sources from which he gets his knowledge of Kvothe (that is, an identity). The following step that Kote takes is to suggest the subjectivity of Kvothe: Kvothe is a being able to think and make decisions, rather

than a mere discourse, and thus, Kote asks Aaron what he would do “if [he] were Kvothe, and terrible clever, *as you say*. And suddenly your head was worth a thousand royals and a duchy to whoever cut it off” (20, my emphasis). Aaron feels unable to answer his question, perhaps because Aaron considers Kvothe a mythical figure rather than an actual being (that is, a closed narrative), and therefore, is unable to regard Kvothe as a subject (his decisions have already been made, and only through a volitional exercise of empathy and mirroring could Aaron consider him a subject). Kote then proceeds to answer the question for Aaron, stating that “if *I* were Kvothe, I’d fake my death, change my name, and find some little town out in the middle of nowhere. Then I’d open an inn and do my best to disappear” (20, emphasis in the original). With this, Kvothe is not only paralleling the figure of Kvothe with his own but is also providing Aaron with the final piece of information that would round the discourse of Mythical Kvothe: the legendary figure is gone, and the reason for that is him disguising as an innkeeper. Since that does not seem valid given the identity that Aaron has built for Kvothe (his text on Kvothe), he asks for proof: “If you really are . . . then can I see your cloak of no particular color?” (20), but after stating so, Aaron rejects that same idea and “burst[s] into a sudden laugh. ‘I’m just havin’ some fun with you, Mr. Kote’” (21). The idea is invalidated not only for his knowledge about Kvothe (as well as for his understanding of Kote), but also about the storyworld, where a cloak of no particular color is impossible to exist (or, rather, chronotopically invalid).

In this sense, literary works such as *The Kingkiller Chronicle* acquire a specific value when considering notions on identity, being narrative constructs. Such a value stems from their translating into linguistic forms every discursive process that characters within the narration perceive or, at least, the ones readers receive. Not only the situations, but also the metatextual ingrained notion that fictional worlds share some aspects with the real world, and the reader expectations towards the genre create a framework within which readers can quickly draw a subjective text dealing with identity construction and identify it as so.

The paragraph above applies to a more general theory on identity: In distinguishing fictional narratives from the non-fictional ones, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* also poses questions regarding identity and subjectivity “Since cognition is intimately tied up with identity and personality” (Stockwell: 176), terms that also require a theoretical introduction. Peter V. Zima defines these terms as follows:

A subject is, among other things, a discursive instance whose development depends on a dialogue with others in the course of which it reacts imitatively, consensually or polemically to other discourses and their subjects, thereby opting in favour of or against a certain vocabulary, particular semantics, relevance criteria, classifications and definitions. Its identity as speaking and acting subject develops in discourse as *narrative programme*. This discourse can only come about in a permanent dialogue with others ... Individual and collective subjects cope with social reality by declaring certain semantic oppositions and differences as *relevant*. (10-11, emphasis in the original)

In his view, identity and the subject are discursive tools that individuals use to define themselves when facing others. The former is the *narrative programme* (11, emphasis in the original), as he calls it: the set of ideas and beliefs that confirm them as subjects (11). As such, as a created element by the subject, it is always prone to whatever modeling the subject actively decides, after a cognitive analysis of their perceptions (11). That is, identity is shaped by the subject, which is, essentially, the perceiving individual: By deciding, and engaging cognitively in linguistic processes, an individual becomes a subject (or a group of individuals a collective subject), and the product of said engagement is identity (11).

A subject, relying on differentiation, is forced to have an identity through processes of oppression, which, according to Veltman and Piper, exploring Cudd, may be defined as whatever external, social element that impedes or delimit a subject or a group of subjects (Veltman & Piper: 3). This also connects to the notion of memory, insofar as identity, as the critic builds it through memory, is a discourse, and, therefore, a text. Memory is, possibly, one of the most important factors when

creating and sustaining identity. Memory, “the storage of acquired knowledge for later recall” (Sherwood: 157), is defined by Groes in the twenty-first century as

a deliberate, voluntary, archival, collective and unavoidably political act, ... [that] is in the first place a physical process that takes place, often spontaneously, in the bodies and minds of people as isolated biological units living in societies and cultures. We connect cultural memory to technical memory, that is, how memory processes play themselves out in and for human beings as individual biological organisms. Both forms are not fixed and stable, but dynamic, mutable and ongoing, and their intersection has slowly been building since the late 1990s. (6)

Groes, thus, implies that memory is a text, a discourse that is being constantly revised by subjects. According to the SEM@S collective, there are at least four different types of memory associated with Western thinking: “close memory” (3), which relates to events from a recent past; “deeper memory” (3), which refers to those events who had a deeper impact to the subject; “social memory” (3), which connects with events related to a determined collective past; and “individual memory” (3), which is the recollection of past events related to the self that a subject possesses (3). Individual Memory, they say using Van Dyke and Alcock as their central pillar, is a conjoined set of malleable memories, and individual needs indicate how these are rebuilt, producing then a living social memory (3). This individual memory connects to narratives that subject construct to formalize their relationship with the external world: As Zima points out, subjects “[do] not only arise, think and act in concrete material ... but became established through a constant interplay with collective, abstract or mythical subjects” (1).

Fictional identities can be as complicated as those who the reader considers “real” (such as their personal identity) insofar as they are discourses. This is not to say that what makes an identity can be that complex (since not all the epistemological value is rationalized –i.e., transformed into a discourse–). Instead, it means that identity discourses can be as convoluted as the semiotic interaction allows them to be. The privilege of a fictional character over one that is not is a

narratological one regarding their memory and their identity: their processes end when the storyworld ceases its production (i.e., when there are no more narratives), and therefore, their structure is both regarded as reliable and finished at the same time. Fictional books set in other worlds (such as *The Kingkiller Chronicle*), moreover, suggest the need for the reader to believe what the narration states since it is the primary (if not the only) source of knowledge a reader has about the storyworld.

Fictional characters are not subjects: they have made their decisions already, and, being a close identity discourse, they are unable to acquire new knowledge. At best, they can be representations of subjectivity. Although this may seem obvious, *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s importance in this topic relies on its deconstruction of the notions of identity and subjectivity, as well as its raising the question of what these terms are, and to what extent they are meaningful in how subjects perceive themselves: by representing at the same time a subject and a closed identity discourse and contrasting them in the same character, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* argues for a revision of the reader's (and the narratee's) relationship with a narrative, which highlights the issue of identity building (the product) and subjectivity (the source).

6. Conclusions

When the methodology of Cognitive Semiotics is applied to the content of the narration, the reading tendency focuses on the different tools that Kvothe, being the narrative voice of many chapters within *The Kingkiller Chronicle* uses to convey his identity, a text, and, as such, a rationalizing tool of both epistemological and ontological knowledge. Fictional identities suggest how identity-building processes may be reflections on how they happen in the referential world, enabling thus a reading of non-referential fiction as subversive and deconstructive in terms of identity, since the narrator is the one that defines both the biological potential and

the contextual environment of the characters, and disabling any potential previous epistemological knowledge for the reader.

Chapter 3. Narratology and Identity

It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story (Rothfuss, 2008: 658)

1. Introduction

The Kingkiller Chronicle's narratological elements suggest that fictional identity is a discourse built through memories, which are shaped codifications of external stimuli. This codification of memories in the shape of discourse is central in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. Therefore, this chapter will explore it through the application of the Cognitive Narratology's "set of loosely confederated heuristic schemes" (Herman, 2013: 3), which focuses on mind, discourse, and these external stimuli. As such, and regarding methodology, this chapter focuses on exploring the novels through the many related notions that exist in cognitive narratology, that is, the four qualities for which Herman argues as central in a narrative (2009: xvi), as well as the many satellite terms that reinforce those (such as narrator, narratee, narrativeness and so on). This approach will allow the dissertation to imply that *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is concerned with the connection between the narrative and the language used to convey it, linking semiotics, cognitive narratology, and traditional narratology (Genette; Stanzel) In this sense, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* supports the idea that the interpretation of a narrative is mainly relevant for its chronotopic experience.

2. Cognitive Narratology

The first narratological approach that this dissertation covers is the cognitive narratology one. According to Herman, Cognitive narratology responds to the need for understanding the link between the mind of readers and the narrative that they

receive (2013: 1). As such, it is crucial to understand what a narrative is within this framework and apply it to this dissertation's corpus.

The Kingkiller Chronicle fulfills every characteristic that Herman proposes as core for a literary work to be considered a narrative: It is "(i) A representation that is situated in – must be interpreted in light of – a specific discourse context or occasion for telling" (Herman, 2009: xvi), since it is a text, and therefore ephemeral, subjective and situated chronotopically in a determined framework; "(ii) The representation, furthermore, cues interpreters to draw inferences about a structured time-course of particularized events." (xvi), implying a target audience with which *The Kingkiller Chronicle* implies a metaleptic game that, furthermore, grasps a tendency, which suggests a particular reading, engaging with the tellability of the narrative.

Herman continues by saying that "(iii) In turn, these events are such that they introduce some sort of disruption or disequilibrium into a storyworld involving human or human-like agents" (xvi), thus requiring a discursive turn-point, something that makes the communicative act "felicitous" (i.e. achieving the four pragmatic goals –quantity, quality, relevance, and manner–); "(iv). The representation also conveys the *experience* of living through this storyworld-in-flux, highlighting the pressure of events on real or imagined consciousnesses affected by the occurrences at issue" (xvi, my emphasis), which is the most relevant aspect in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, since experience of the storyworld indicates subjectivity of the narration itself, allowing different points of view of the same story¹⁸. Thus, experience varies solely on the narrator itself, enabling a third person –distant– experience or a first-person –internal– experience.

¹⁸ While (iii) is the main point of certain narratives, it could be argued that other narrations could engage with readers to suggest them to reorganize the interaction to make their "infelicitousness" some sort of "felicitousness".

The Kingkiller Chronicle, in short, focuses on what Herman calls Qualia, “the sense of ‘what is like’ for someone ... to have a particular experience” (xvi). Both the narratee and the reader can read throughout the novel that what is important is the psychological imprint of the described events rather than whether these appear accurately, especially since there are different accounts of specific facts. The discussion that both Bast and Chronicler have after Kvothe has finished telling them his story for the day reinforces this. While Bast seems to argue that, by remembering his story, Kvothe will become a hero again, as long as he is kept “from focusing on the dark things. If not...” (Rothfuss, 2008: 659), Chronicler, on the other hand, is not interested in what comes after his story. He is concerned with “The *real* story” (659, emphasis in the original), that “Without the dark parts it’s just some silly f—” (659). This example suggests that both are interested in the psychological imprint of Kvothe’s actions, but one is concerned with the future (that is, with new identity-building processes) and the other one with the present (that is, his identity until now).

In *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, the experience of the narration is shared through the community and other chronotopic elements, being, perhaps, one of the most critical teleological aspects of this narration. While the main narrator, Kvothe, tells his story, he is sometimes interrupted by other characters to correct his narration, or, directly, to confront it. With that, readers (whose only access to the story is merely textual), question themselves about the different narrative accounts of the same events, and, at the same time, question traits of the narrators, namely, their status, their knowledge and their stance towards it. These can be seen especially in chapters titled “Interlude”, which usually serve this purpose throughout the core novels. Right before the scene with the bandit, by the end of *The Name of the Wind*, Chronicler entertains the inn patrons by telling them what Kvothe told him: “he was walking home late at night and some bandits jumped him in an alleyway” (625). However, one of the patrons interrupts him: “It was broad daylight ... In the middle of town. All manner of folk were around to see it” (625). With this exchange, the narrative focuses on the different accounts that the same

event could have and effectively weakens the figure of the omniscient narrator by means of questioning their position, implying that, while the reader has read the story from Kvothe –“I was strolling down a poorly lit part of Newhall Lane when something blunt struck me on the back of the head and I was bundled off into a nearby alley, half-senseless” (474)–, there are, at least, four different accounts of the same story (briefly stated in 474, and 625-628). That, added to Aaron’s reaction when Kvothe tells him his true identity (2011a: 20-21), reinforces the idea of narrators being unable to be omniscient, or rather, disregarded as such: by having a character not believing Kvothe’s account, the narration suggests that even the autodiegetic narrator, the one that “undoubtedly produce[s] a strong illusion of realism and credibility” (Guillemette and Lévesque: n/p) is capable of being as reliable as readers are willing to validate, and thus reflects on the power of narrative voices.

As such, Kvothe’s testimony is as valid as any other, even when carrying proof: when mythical Kvothe tells the story of his staying with Felurian in an inn, not even carrying the *Shaed*, a cloak made of shadows (Rothfuss, 2011a: 657), makes him more believable. It is not until the innkeeper, Losi, recognizes him as someone that had not known “his way around a woman” (700), but now has (and after a few lines directed towards her), that they start believing his story¹⁹. In other words, the narrative suggests that “true” is a category within “valid”, and that the narrative voices focus on validity, i.e. knowing their audiences, to tell a story, rather than any other factor, highlighted when he says that he “told them the story. Or rather, I told them *a* story. If I’d told them the entire truth they wouldn’t have believed it” (700, emphasis in the original). With this, the narrative suggests an almost Lyotardian approach to knowledge, focusing on language as the primary source to it (Scofield: 218)²⁰.

¹⁹ As it will be argued later, through examples such as this one, the setting is thus described as a highly patriarchal one.

²⁰ Scofield is referring to the postulates argued in Lyotard.

The chronicle also argues in favor of what Mäkelä suggested as “Narrativity” (154), the success of a text as a narrative through “mediated experientiality” (154) (i.e. the success of a determined interpretation of it). Effectively, it argues for the potential universality of the cognitive narratological process, including a gradient scale of success that grounds the basis for the previously mentioned term of tendency (see page ix). In this sense, the focus of the narrative analysis relies in spatiality (that is, what is the most popular reading, which, along with other metatextual elements –such as previous similar works that suggest a specific interpretation, or publishing categorization that affects the reader expectations and therefore their reading–, suggest a particular reading of a literary work) rather than in temporality: there is not only one reading, or a valid/invalid dichotomy, but rather a tendency to read a literary work under a particular lens instead of other. This focus is especially vital in fiction like *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, where world-building depends entirely on the reader, rather than having any references in the “real” world to which they can relate their reading.

The narrative voice’s position in *The Kingkiller Chronicle* may be difficult to define, as there are multiple narrators that play the double role of character and narrative voice²¹. This tends to produce a sensation of confusion because of the constant reversion of these two roles, or, at least, an impression of “[the implicit narrator’s] discourse, too, is in fact being quoted by a still higher-level voice” (Margolin: 6). What is more, readers find that there are several narrative voices telling the same story from different perspectives within the core novels. This idea hints that “[i]n multiple narrator texts ... conflicts between the reports on the same events by different narrators indicate that at least one of them is unreliable” (14), without answering which narrative voice would be unreliable. This is especially interesting in texts in which the reader does not have a referent in the real world of

²¹ In trying to be exact to what here will be referred as a narrative, it is important to review three key elements: narrator, narration and narratee. For the sake of clearness, this thesis deals with the Narrator as defined by Margolin (n/p) and Chatman, Narration as defined by Hühn (n/p), Schaeffer (n/p), and Cusset (n/p), and Narratee as defined by Herman (2009a).

the specific framework within which the narration is set (that is, for instance, but not exclusively high dark fantasy) since that tends to produce in the reader a sensation of not knowing by which version they should abide. Furthermore, in the *Chronicle* there is not an unreliable narrator that is not embodied in a being capable of lying, or, at least, unknowing of the narration process –That is to say, given the narratological space, there is not a character (nor a narrative voice) that is potentially unable to lie.

The tendency, for instance, of retrospective writings (Vilar: n/p) such as *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is to acknowledge that the narrative voice knows what is going to happen (n/p). In the case of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, both narrative voices (the external narrator and Kvothe) acknowledge the existence of a particular narratee and engage with the reader in asking who that narratee is.

Through the methodology that Cognitive Narratology provides, the analysis of the cognitive relationship between narrator and narratee, as well as narratee and reader (Herman, 2013: 6, 14)–, readers can determine to what extent a narrator is involved within the narration, with what has been called focalization by Genette (10), reviewed and defended by, among others, Niederhoff, and further explored by Chatman with what he calls the “degree of narratorhood” (264). According to the latter, this scale goes from zero –a narrator with a degree of focalization of zero that “Todorov symbolizes by the formula *Narrator* > *Character* (where the narrator knows more than the character, or more exactly, *says* more than any of the characters knows)” (Genette, 188–89, emphasis in the original), that maintains a sort of linguistic neutrality towards the stated, being the most traditional narrator in literary works–, to an involved character that, in terms of Chatman, requires “that the voice-over be identifiable as the character’s, whose lips do not move” (195). This latter is a narrator whose involvement with the narration is more significant, and whose narration is, allegedly at least, the experience of the event. In the case of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, readers find these two sorts of narrators at their extremes. Given the subjectivity of every narration, and understanding that, in fiction, narrator and author are not the same figures, “narrative and fiction are intersecting categories

and must be studied as such” (Schaeffer: 6). In *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, this issue is explored deeply by engaging with the reader in a debate in which the limits between fact and fiction are blurred by the narrative voice that speaks to the narratee, as will be seen later.

Both Bamberg (2004) and Georgakopoulou, the former argues, suggest an alternative to understanding narratives as a whole that studies “the way stories surface in everyday conversation ... as the locus where identities are continuously practiced and tested out” (Bamberg, 2012: 22). Through this analysis, identity can be understood for the individual as a micro-managed narrative that helps to situate themselves within determinate chronotopic coordinates, allowing them to distinguish different subjects and therefore projecting themselves in different ways depending on the narratee, helping thus in comprehending their positioning (22). Identity in this sense, Bamberg continues, helps analyzing how epistemological knowledge is acquired, where characters appear fulfilling different character roles (such as the main character, the “villain” and so on), while defining the same epistemological knowledge as an interaction between subjects: “the way the referential world is put together points to how tellers ‘want to be understood’” (23). The main difference between approximating identity as a collection of “small stories” (23) and as a “big story” (23) relies on the aim: “small story” analysis tries to study how individuals construct their identity, whereas “big story” analysis aims for an interpretation of the story to see how individuals have built their epistemological knowledge (23). For literary works, the analysis is analogous in separating the story in chapters or analyzing the whole story (23). While any of them is valuable as a means to approach the epistemological knowledge that subjects within the literary work offer, the former seems to have been disfavored in pursuit of the latter (24). This dissertation aims for a balanced and dual analysis of the literary work, where the “small story” analysis will be used to study the identity-building processes and the “big story” analysis will be used to study the world-building and discourse reliability of the main characters, or, in other words,

exploring the internal and the external organization of the identity process that the narrators present.

“Small story” analysis brings to the focus the particular circumstances by which the content of a certain situation appears within a conversation: “Through the scrutiny of small stories in a variety of sites and context, the aim becomes to legitimize the management of different and often competing and contradictory positions as the mainstay of identity through narrative ...” (24). Contrary to that, a “big story” analysis brings to life the reflections that the narrator has on the represented knowledge of the story to produce epistemological knowledge based on experience rather than interaction (24). This dual analysis contests the most traditional ways to see narratology while rooting part of the study in them. In short, the narratological approach to identity will be performed in the next section dually to fully explore the narrative aspects of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, of the two main narrators of the series, that is, the third-person narrator that appears in the “present” framework and the main character, who acts as the narrator of the “past”, autobiographical section of the story. As such, the former will be more helpful in analyzing narratological presentations of identity as fluid, while the latter will procure information on understanding the ways Kvothe’s identity is constructed.

3. Identity as a Narration

As Bamberg argues, a narrative act requires the individual to make an exercise of self-identification to help them providing context to the framework within which they live (2012: 3). Moreover, this same exercise is done by using a determined set of tropes that help to encapsulate the narrator and the narration within the same framework: “Narrating, a speech activity that involves ordering characters in space and time, is a privileged genre for identity construction because it requires situating characters in time and space through gesture, posture, facial cues, and gaze in coordination with speech” (3). Narration, then, as the means by

which individuals build their identity, must be considered as a mixture between linguistic iteration and the psychosocial interaction among subjects. It is that so, that when considering literary works that deal with identity construction, the reading of them requires the reader to go further into the literary work to find its meta-literary clues. In other words, identity-building analysis in literary works requires a perspective that considers the cognitive and pragmatic elements suggested by the literary work, including, among them, several metatextual factors such as the reading framework or the secondary sources that might have been read beforehand.

Bamberg identifies what in Erikson is called the “ego identity” (24) as the belief of identity being narratable (Bamberg, 2012: 12). Western society assumes that life (a notion that should be understood here as chronotopic, within which a subject is such) is manageable in chunks that can be interwoven together in the shape of a narrative: “important moments tie into important events, events into episodes, and episodes into a life story” (12). In this life story, the main element for the identity discourse is the character-narrator, regarded in terms of internal and external organizations. The internal organization of this character is the most traditional, being what gives form to the character –complex traits that justify the actions that they take– (13). The external organization “takes plot as the overarching principle that lends order to human action in response to the threat of a discontinuous and seemingly meaningless life by a set of possible continuities (often referred to by cognitive narratologists as ‘schemata’ or ‘scripts’)” (13). It is through this blend of both external and internal traits that the narrative process is important for identity construction and life narrativization (13). Another plausible reason for life narrativization is, as Bamberg argues, the Western tendency towards a “narrative mode of thinking” (14) that has been discussed by both Bruner and Polkinghorne (14), by which subjects try to understand their social surroundings, which are built “narratively” (14), Herman argues, as Bamberg suggests by pointing out *Story Logic*, and *Basic Elements of Narrative* (14).

Adler, Skalina, and McAdams in 2008 took Bruner and Polkinghorne's investigations mentioned above to build a narrative model of identity which is relevant for the study of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. In this model, specific episodes of the character-narrator's life are defining towards future actions, blurring thus the difference between the internal and the external organization (726). Life as a narration, something that *The Kingkiller Chronicle* argues in favor, therefore, becomes both the overarching principle and the justification of future decisions, as is deeply explored in the core novels: by using two different narrators, one external and one internal, the narration makes clear the difference between these two organizations. The internal appears in Kvothe's narration, presents, as he states, a factual consideration of his life, explaining the motives, the events, and the situations that would tell the story of who he is (Rothfuss, 2008, 54). The external narrator, however, is the one that effectively directs the narrative, or rather, gives it a purpose. While Kvothe's story would be enough as a self-discourse, the third person narrator provides the reader with an intradiegetic reason why Kvothe's identity is relevant in Temerant. It produces a reason behind the actual self-discourse, and the need of the narrative to tell Kvothe's identitarian discourse, rather than Chronicler's or Bast's, for instance. By the end of the first days in which Kvothe is telling his story, a known (and disliked by Chronicler) bandit enters the Waystone Inn speaking a strange language: "His eyes moved sluggishly, as if he had been addled by a blow to the head. 'Aethin tseh cthystoi scthaiven vei'" (Rothfuss, 2008: 629, emphasis in the original). This language, however, is not his, but rather the language of a creature that has possessed him, a skin dancer (638). In a moment of slight lucidity, the bandit says "'I... want...' he began, his voice slow and thick. 'I... look...' He trailed off, his gaze wandering aimlessly around the room, his eyes unfocused" (629, emphasis in the original). After a brief combat scene, in which the bandit seems to respond aimlessly to everyone's attacks without feeling pain, even when stabbed,

[f]inally, ... the mercenary's gaze came to rest on the red-haired man behind the bar. Kvothe did not blanch or back away when the man's attention settled onto him.

Their eyes met ... The mercenary's eyes sharpened again, focusing on Kvothe. The wide, humorless smile reappeared, made macabre by the blood running down his face. "*Te aithiyn Seathaloi?*" he demanded. "*Te Rhintae?*". (632-633, emphasis in the original).

Both the returning to the indiscernible language, the bandit's expression, as well as his eyes focusing in Kvothe suggest that he was the original target of the creature and that there are supernatural beings that aim to contact/attack Kvothe, but the reason remains unknown for now in the narrative for readers and narratees. This is the first time in the narrative that such a language appears, and the second event in Newarre in which Kvothe is involved that has to do with supernatural creatures (the first one, the Scrael of 2008: 9). Furthermore, in narratological terms, this suggests a need to keep Kvothe's narrative going, in order to explain what has happened, since the only thing that the reader has to access Kvothe's story are Kvothe's words: "You know better than that, Bast. All of this is my fault. The scrael, the war. All my fault" (637). With that, the external organization of the story is hinted: it is not only that Kvothe's identity is compelling by itself, but rather that his actions are, allegedly, the ones that have produced the invasion of these supernatural creatures in Newarre, as well as provoking a war. Moreover, and given the few clues that the narrative suggests –the first time in the book that Kvothe faces five Scrael, a feat by which he "should be dead *twice*" (41, emphasis in the original), or being able to overcome Felurian's powers, for instance–, Kvothe is not only the key to explain what is happening, but also to deal with war and those supernatural creatures.

The notion of understanding the self as a character has been argued by several authors, including Schönert (2011), Bamberg (2012), and Margolin (2013). In relating both terms, the self's evolution freezes while stating the discourse, translating into identity as a present discourse about past events that propitiate a "snapshot" of a subject, but existing in a timely ambivalence (Bamberg, 2012: 4): it is a discourse of all that came and is, and it is only valid for the present. At the same time, the analysis of its bi-chronical nature serves to identify the discursive elements that build identity quickly. Moreover,

If past-time narration is triggered by the question “Who am I?” having the narrator’s quest for identity or sense of self as its goal, the leeway for ambiguity, transgression of boundaries, or exploration of novel identities is more restricted: the goal is rather to condense and unite, to resolve ambiguity, and to deliver answers that lay further inquiry into past and identity to rest. (5)

While Kvothe undertakes identity processes similar to the ones from individuals in the Western world, this process narrows towards the search of cohesive internal and external organizations. Furthermore, to reinforce the sense of resolving ambiguity, the narrative relies on Kvothe’s masking of his own identity. By clearly differentiating between the mythical Kvothe and the innkeeper Kote, he is able to produce a clear narrative of his former self, considered dead. He makes this clear by saying that he is “not what I was ... a myth” (Rothfuss, 2008: 44-45). But right after acknowledging his condition of narration (and thus, a closed discourse with a beginning and an end), Kvothe attempts to subvert this very condition by stating, in the present, that he is a “very special kind of myth that creates itself” (45). With this, apart from suggesting the issue of identity as an allegedly closed narration to the reader, the narrator focalizes in solving the ambiguity: Kvothe has given up being the agent (apart from the narrative action) and now solely focuses in masking his identity and telling everyone that he is dead.

The Kingkiller Chronicle, thus, focuses on the mechanisms of telling a story, as well as how the stories are received by the audience, especially when he tells the story of how he started building his reputation at the University: when Kvothe is about to be punished by his bad behavior at the University, his punishment being three lashes on his back, he prepares himself by eating nahlrou, a mild drug that anesthetizes and prevents bleeding (274). After the three lashes, at the Medica, the place where students learn a blend of medicine, nursery, and herbalism, becoming physickers, Master Arwyl notices the high dosage of nahlrou Kvothe has ingested and asks for it, threatening Kvothe that if he lies, “neither I nor any of mine will stitch you. I will not be lied to” (280), so he confesses that he has taken the drug. He mentions this episode when making a list of all the rumors that he spread:

I had openly defied one of the masters in front of his own class and avoided expulsion. When whipped, I hadn't cried out or bled. On top of everything else, I had apparently managed to infuriate Master Elodin to such an extent that he had thrown me off the roof of the Crockery. (317)

By that time, however, the reader knows that not all these stories are true, or, at best, are conflicting with previous accounts of them. These three episodes are, in order, true, partially true (since the implicit argument is that he can do so without the use of any drugs), and blatantly false, as the latter goes differently, according to previous narrative instances. When Kvothe seeks Elodin's guidance, he tells Kvothe that, if he wants it, he should as well "'Jump off this roof.' That's when I realized that all of this had been a test. ... Still looking him in the eye, I stepped off the edge of the roof ... Then I struck the ground. ... Hard ... Elodin ... looked down at me ... 'That was the stupidest thing I've ever seen'" (314-315). However, Kvothe lets the people spread that false story to build his reputation. By so doing, Kvothe develops further the idea of validity over truth: his identity discourse is not based on events that (allegedly) happened, but rather on the stories that people circulate about himself. He is regarded as that figure, even though he does not consider such stories as valid. The narrative here not only suggests that Kvothe lies about the events mentioned above but also reflects on the narratological feature of reliability. The question, then, is to what extent a narratee/reader can regard the narrator as reliable if said narrator is confessing his lies and agreeing on them being lies.

Furthermore, the narration also raises questions about the two identity discourses that Kvothe maintains at the same time, a Kvothe that can perform feats, and the Kvothe behind these feats: even during the same chronotopic coordinates, readers and narratees learn that he knew that he was spreading lies—"I let that story circulate uncorrected, as it was preferable to the embarrassing truth" (317)—, implying that, through other means apart from masking, or rather, as the product of using it, a narrator is able to maintain more than one identity, as argued in this chapter. These masks, or multiple identities, may be connected to what a subject considers to be their valid identity or not. In the narration, this is highlighted by the

difference in the stories that Kvothe uses to build his reputations. Some of them he calls “information: I had been admitted without a letter of recommendation. The masters had given me three talents to attend, rather than make me pay a tuition. I had survived for years on the streets of Tarbean, living off my wits” (317). Some others, however, belong to the rumor category, “lies so outrageous that people would repeat them even though they were obviously untrue. I had demon blood in me. I could see in the dark. I only slept an hour each night. When the moon was full I would talk in my sleep, speaking a strange language no one could understand” (317). This distinction serves the purpose of the narrator being able to separate what he regards as valid (information) from what he considers invalid (rumors), while at the same time implying a third valid discourse (Kvothe spreads all three). The fact that he states this in the narrative serves to indicate this as narratologically crucial: it is not only that these rumors were spread, but also that he was the one spreading them, along with his friend Basil. By focusing on the agency, the narrative explicitly states the connection between itself and the narrator and reinforces two ideas at the same time. First, that Kvothe is a narratological prodigy, insofar as he is capable of creating and spreading these narrations. Second, that everything he says explicitly connects to his deeds and actions, which are the ones that shape his actual self.

4. Reliability

The narrative voice is one of the most potent entities in any narration, as it can be argued that it has all the power over what is being described. It is through its view that readers receive the story (as suggested in Shen: n/p). In non-referential worlds (where the narratee silently acknowledges the story), first-person narrative voices usually present an interesting case of readers being almost forced to believe in what they are reading, since, as suggested earlier, most (if not all) of the readers’ input on the storyworld stems from the dialogical relationship between the narrative voice and them, thus being in an even more powerful situation over the reader than in other sorts of narration. Kvothe’s narration, for instance, could be correct, and

the fact that it is the most detailed one, and that it is allegedly autobiographical, forces his view to the readers, leaving them, at best, with a notion of reluctant belief. If none of the narratees (that are present in the book) object, the reader does not have any clue to consider the narrator unreliable.

Kvothe's narration is therefore presented as reliable: It is the only source that the reader has to grasp the ideas that the narration conveys in terms of event description as well as in world-building. Furthermore, giving a testimonial account of certain events that have been associated with him, explaining what happened from his point of view, suggests a provision of an objective account of said events. However, and as has been previously hinted, the reader knows that Kvothe is known for his storytelling skills, including twisting the truth to provide the narratee with an appealing story. He is a character that prefers to rely on the metanarrative content by being concerned with the form, which suggests that Kvothe may compromise his reliability to tell a good story.

Murphy argues that Booth's consideration of reliability as connected with the implied author can be problematic and that there is a need to offer "a more secure definition of narrative reliability" (67). For Murphy, to ascertain the reliability of the narrative, readers must ponder the whole story, rather than just parts of it (77), and therefore, he implies that reliability is concerned with the big story analysis that this dissertation previously mentioned (see pages 71-72): for Murphy, the reader knows that any story has a beginning and a conclusion and that it is possible to grasp them when they appear in the narration (78). This seems analogous to the three days that Kvothe requires to tell his story. In that sense, the frame story would argue for this structure. Even though it is not finished yet, the reader knows how the story ends, with Kvothe opening an inn and hiding under the mask of Innkeeper Kote. Since the structure is clear, the reader can argue for or against Kvothe's reliability. This is not the case, however, of the third-person narrator that we find in the interludes, the prologue, and the epilogue of each novel. Although readers can see the beginning and the middle section of the narration, its

reliability is not at stake yet, as can be inferred in Murphy, supported by Booth (Murphy: 76), since not all of *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is accessible to them²².

Murphy also suggests five factors that help a reader to determine what a reliable narrator is and what is not in first-person fiction. The first one would be a “secure speaking-location back home” (68). While this may be the case of Kvothe’s narration, the third-person final episodes of each novel seem to argue otherwise. In *The Name of the Wind*, while Kvothe appears to be at peace, “his eyes were far away, remembering. He did not hum or whistle. He did not sing” (Rothfuss, 2008: 655). Similarly, in *The Wise Man’s Fear*, the reader faces a Kvothe that is neither safe nor calm. In trying to open a mysterious chest, his expression “was merely resigned. It was the expression of a man who has finally received bad news he’d already known was on the way” (990). This sense of uneasiness, added to the above-mentioned fact that he is masking his true self, suggests that, while he may be comfortable at the Waystone inn, he is neither secure nor “back home”, as Murphy argued, but instead masking this position as well.

The second of these factors is “the sense of the classical middle style of standard English” (Murphy: 68). By this, Murphy means a concern with the rhetoric aspects of the narrative itself. Kvothe indeed uses such middle style rhetoric when narrating, and so does the third-person narrator, although the means to achieve this middle seem to be by blending both the high and the plain rhetorical styles. The tension that comes from this blending is suggested the second time he encounters Denna, by stating that “It would be nice to say that our eyes met and I moved smoothly to her side. It would be nice to say that I smiled and spoke of pleasant things in carefully metered rhyming couplets, like Prince Gallant from some faerie story” (2008: 386). While this description may fall into the category of middle or high, here readers are suggested to see that either there is a pretentious/wishful intention to enhance the rhetorical style or a (make-believe) construct to indicate it.

²² Although one could explore its reliability on each of the novels separately and separating the whole of the trilogy’s narration into three different internal narrations.

Right after that, however, he rejects said statements and instead, he says that “In truth, I simply stood. It was Denna, the young woman I had met in Roent’s caravan so long ago” (386). The tension here is not only about the opposed content of these passages, but also in the rhetorical form. Kvothe’s narration acknowledges so and shifts the rhetorical style between high and middle to make his story reliable. However, by marking one of the propositions over the other, the effect is that the reader is suggested to acknowledge the second one as true. Furthermore, Kvothe also emphasizes this sensation by adding reinforcing clauses (such as the aforementioned “In truth”) throughout the whole narration.

A third and fourth aspect would be to have both “an observer-narrator status” and “ethical maturity” (Murphy: 68). Arguably, Kvothe’s position is one of an observer rather than as an agent. Not only because it is an autobiographical story, but also because the question about his reliability (and therefore his being making the truth up) appears throughout the whole series. As for ethical maturity, it is hard to say whether Kvothe shows maturity or not, but the narration, insofar as it shows a narrator that retrospectively repents on what he considers terrible deeds, presents the reader with a process of ethical evolution from young and mythical Kvothe and Older Kote. The idea behind this reliability aspect is to suggest that, since he is not only telling the things of which he feels proud, or that are ethically good for the narrator, there is a sense of reliability based on Western’s rejection of shame and wrong deeds.

The final aspect of Murphy’s reliability is “a plot structure which involves the retrospective re-evaluation or Aristotelian anagnorisis of a character other than the narrator. If this much is accepted, unreliable narration may then be defined in terms of a series of marked departures from this model” (68). Here the reader faces the same issue, the question being to what extent is the narrator the main character. The narrator, then, is a different character than his former self since both the narrative and the character seem to state so: while there is a continuum, the chronotopic situation is not the same, and therefore, past-Kvothe and now-Kote are different characters. This separation would be reinforced by the fact that Kvothe is

allegedly masking his true identity, and thus having, essentially, a different identity discourse that, potentially, marks him to some readers as less reliable.

But, despite all of this, the reader is suggested to believe that they are both the same character and that Kote is a mask. The question that arises, therefore, is whether a character reads its own identity as being another person or not, and whether this is done ad infinitum or not. To solve the issue of eternal epistemological readers (mainly that there could be a reader reading the identity of a reader), I propose dissecting the personal identity discourse and suggest that the set of essential beliefs about oneself (as indicated in Dobson: n/p) –part of the identity of the self– be called cognitive identity. This sort of identity, therefore, would be a personalized discourse that subjects use to try to rationalize themselves, regardless of the truth behind it, but concerned with its validity.

That is, if, as was mentioned before, cognitive identity is concerned with the self's ontology, rather than grasping any epistemological knowledge, even of oneself, then it may take the form of a narrative, in which selves try to define themselves by stating what they consider to be their primordial traits –to which they use any narratological device they know, including both positive statements and the rhetoric of negation. This identity discourse may or may not be different from other sorts of identity (mainly the overlapping layers of social and personal identities), but it is the identity behind the masked identity. If we understand identity as a discourse (and therefore, a semiotic social connection), cognitive identity would be the sort of discourse that subjects build for themselves, some sort of essentialist belief in oneself. It is at the core of their principles and beliefs, working, thus, within Dobson's conception of Self Identity (n/p). As such, it would be what individuals believe that their traits, personality, and so on, are (it is not the same to think oneself being brave than being brave in terms of identity construction). In this sense, Murphy's final statement would be against Kvothe's reliability, insofar as he is reading himself, rather than another character. Supporting this using first-person narrative and an interplay between truths and lies in his first-person narration, and a way in which Kote is focalized, using to this the third-person narrator, *The*

Kingkiller Chronicle implies this cognitive connection and debate between multiple identities (or masks of the Cognitive Identity)²³. However, the question of whether the first-person narrator of *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is reliable or not remains, at best, answered by potential unreliability, where either Kvothe is unreliable because he is lying about being himself, or unreliable because he is himself and therefore necessarily lying about himself.

Applying Riggan's suggestions, this chronicle seems to argue that "First-person narration is, then, always at least potentially unreliable, in that the narrator, with these human imitations of perception and memory and assessment, may easily have missed, forgotten, or misconstrued certain incidents, words, or motives" (19-20, qtd. in Murphy: 6). Furthermore, that same statement seems to be similar to the technique that Kvothe has been using throughout the Chronicle: by contrasting something that appears unreliable with something that, at least in appearance, seems reliable, the reader is cued to believe the latter over the former. Thus, the Chronicle suggests that the third-person narrator is reliable: as Murphy argues, "In the terms of this linguistic opposition, the third person is the unmarked term. This is a fundamental reason why in third-person fiction, the majority of texts are able to represent themselves as being reliable accounts of the events that they narrate" (72-73). In *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, only some of the criteria that had been used for analyzing Kvothe's reliability are applicable for the third-person narrator, since this one does include certain aspects that argue against the sense of omniscience that third-person narrators usually convey. One of these elements is what Murphy calls the Stage Manager Voice: "The stage manager's voice represents the eruption of the first person within the discourse of the third-person narrative. One of its major functions ... is to introduce a dose of unreliability into an otherwise reliable account, for deliberate aesthetic effect" (73). This voice appears at certain moments of the third-person narration.

²³ It should be noted here that cognitive identity makes no reference to "what a character is", but rather to "the discourse that characters believe to be at their core".

The first example of this appears at the beginning of chapter two of *The Name of the Wind*: “It was one of those perfect autumn days so common in stories and so rare in the real world ... Everything said, *you* couldn’t hope for a nicer day to have a half dozen exsoldiers with hunting bows relieve *you* of everything *you* owned” (Rothfuss, 2008: 18, my emphases). This narrator has not seemingly used the first-person voice to declare any sentence, yet by addressing the reader directly, the narrator is making himself patent, and no longer they are a mere account of the facts with alleged objectivity. Instead, the narrator is here deliberately acknowledging the event as a narration and making a metaleptic approach towards it, as they do in the following example: “Oh, certainly he didn’t relish the thought of someone hurting him ... To really fear something you have to dwell on it” (319). In so doing, the first-person appears implicitly in the text by giving the narrator a personalized voice when describing the events. Moreover, the narrator reinforces this metaleptic element (Pier), breaking by differentiating between the real world and the one from stories. While the narratee of this reference to the real world is arguable (either the reader or the narratee), what is relevant is the narrator’s intrusion in the narrative, teasing a reading of this narrator as unreliable.

The second of these elements, related to the first one, is what Murphy calls “standpoint limitation” (84) defined as

the unexpected revelation within a particular narrative fiction of the unreliable perspective of a first-person narrator by the introduction of a second or subsequent section narrated by a different firstperson narrator. Ordinarily, the reader will utilize serial processing to resolve any outstanding discrepancies caused by these conflicting testimonies. The reader will do this by deferring to that narrator who speaks last or who has greater social power or whose words are couched in standard English. (84)

This limitation enables the analysis of temporary narrators, such as Bast or Chronicler, on which the narrative focuses in a few instances. In the example above, in which Chronicler is telling to the Waystone patrons Kvothe’s story, stating that

“he was walking home late at night and some bandits jumped him in an alleyway” (Rothfuss, 2008: 625), and Cob corrects him by saying that “It was broad daylight ... In the middle of town. All manner of folk were around to see it” (625), what Murphy suggests is subverted, since the one that holds both more social power and speaks a more standardized version of English is Chronicler, who speaks first. Yet this is a subversion only to readers that regard Kvothe’s account as valid: the reader has already heard how that story develops in Kvothe’s account of it, but if the reader assumes that Kvothe is unreliable, and for that his account is regarded as invalid, the events that they are describing may not have happened as he or Chronicler state. The answer to what happened precisely remains unknown for such a reader.

Moreover, if the reader accepts that the third-person narrator has a voice (and therefore is a character apart from being the narrator), “the unexpected revelation of the unreliable status of a particular first-person narrator caused by a switch to third-person narration” (Murphy: 84), and the subsequent consideration of third-person reliability could apply to the analysis. In high dark fantasy, however, accounting elements from a third-person perspective may be only a stylistic agreement. In *The Hobbit*, the alleged author of the chronicle is no other but Bilbo Baggins, as is implied by saying that “Bilbo was sitting in his study writing his memoirs—he thought of calling them ‘There and Back Again, a Hobbit’s Holiday’” (Tolkien, 2001: 484), which is the subheading of the book. Similarly, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo Baggins is the one in charge of relating the whole story, even describing events in which he did not take part or filling the story with details that should be unbeknownst to him (Tolkien, 2004). This happens as well with the second-person narrator of *Aura* (Fuentes), which acts primarily as a third-person narrator that is completely omniscient: the narrator knows Felipe’s psyche as if it was theirs. By knowing so, the reader might question the distance that the narrator is setting between themselves and the narration.

Contrary to usual considerations on the author, which is usually considered a somewhat neutral narrative voice, under the term “implied author” (Schmid: 3), it is essential to note that, in this dissertation, the author will only be considered not

as an actual person, but rather as a metaphorical cognitive function within the reader in charge of articulating the text that will be stacked in the memory and analyzed by the critic²⁴. In this sense, the figure of the author understood as the producer of the raw materials (that is, Patrick Rothfuss in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*) is irrelevant for this analysis as an actual person that lives in the referential world, save for a few instances described in the second section. Their narrations, whether the raw materials or their testimony –as secondary sources if considered–, is what should be taken into account as sources to analyze a text.

5. Conclusions

Thanks to the methodology and the theoretical framework of cognitive narratology, Kvothe's identity discourse can be regarded as a narrative, and subject of the same terminology. As such, the framework to study identity as a narration has been established, as well as a plausible intersectional field of research, cognitive identity, or the self's ontological narration. Through the study of Kvothe's unreliability, as well as a plausible third-person unreliable narrator, the chronicle reinforces the idea of narrations as identity: by disregarding or making the reader suspicious about the narrated facts, especially in the case of two unreliable narrators, what is stated is pragmatically "infelicitous" and therefore is unsatisfactory for the reader. In that case, the narration would fail in providing quality, and it is the reader the one who infers such a trait. To do so, the reader would try to answer the question of in what context what is being stated is not a lie. The answer to that could be that it is not insofar as it depicts a psychological reasoning by which the reader receives information not about the facts, but about the psychological imprint that such events left in Kvothe, or, in the most radical cases, what are the narratological aspects on which Kvothe focuses to construct his self-theory. That is, that the whole discourse provides to the reader, at the very least,

²⁴ For more on the Implied Author, Cf. Birke and Tilmann.

an account on how Kvothe is a narrator and that he is willing to chronicle his story because of that.

**SECTION II: "A SMALL, SULLEN SILENCE". MIND AND TRAUMA IN
TEMERANT**

SUMMARY OF SECTION II

Inside the Waystone, a pair of men huddled at one corner of the bar. They drank with quiet determination, avoiding serious discussions of troubling news. In doing this they added a small, sullen silence to the larger, hollow one. It made an alloy of sorts, a counterpoint. (Rothfuss, 2008: 1)

This section will focus on the novella *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, comparing it to the core novels, to explore how the storyworld presents alternate mindsets, especially in the shape of trauma. As such, the first chapter will provide a brief definition of what will be considered here as a novella, as well as dealing with the differences between high dark fantasy novels and novellas. After establishing the framework, the second chapter will focus on the notion of trauma, the way through which the storyworld cues the reader towards exploring alternate mindsets within the same storyworld, and how it applies to Auri, the main character of the novella, and her identity. Finally, the third chapter of this section will cover the narratological devices that the novella uses to explore such an alternate mindset, focusing on how the novella conveys meaning, and how the discourse is shaped to reinforce the identity of a person with an alternate mindset.

Chapter 4. Fantasy and *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*

But underneath, there was a secret deep within the hidden heart of things. Mandrag never told her that. She did not think he knew. Auri found that secret for herself.

She knew the true shape of the world. All else was shadow and the sound of distant drums (Rothfuss 2014a: 144).

1. Introduction

Novellas have not produced as many critical approaches as novels. This may be because of the hybridity of the narrative: it is neither as profound and rich in details as a novel nor as focused and swift as a short story. This niche in the middle between novels and short stories has made them one of the less-studied genres, and to some, regarded as failed novels (Joliedupre: n/p). Despite this, it is its less explored nature that allows them to be less constrained by rules and expectations. As such, a writer sometimes must include a brief apology for their writing them or add them as an interlude between books of a bigger saga. This is the case of the first novella within *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld: *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, written in 2014 in between *The Wise Man's Fear* (Rothfuss 2011a) and the unpublished yet *The Doors of Stone*.

The focus of this second section is the 2014's novella *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, which primarily deals with Auri, one of the characters of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, and is not "book three. It's not a mammoth tome" (Rothfuss, 2014d: n/p) showing, from her point of view, how she lives and how she is preparing a present for someone that she is awaiting, in an ambiguous timeframe in which Kvothe is not in the University during *The Wise Man's Fear*, as the book suggests

(2014a)²⁵. This section is divided into three different chapters. The first one concerns the ontology of the novella, as well as the differences between a high dark fantasy novella and a high dark fantasy novel. It is essential to understand, as will be explored during the next chapters, that Auri is depicted as a traumatized character, or, rather, as a character with an alternate mindset, and therefore, perhaps unreliable²⁶. As such, the sense of fantasy that the narration suggests might not be based on what appears in the novella, but in many of the metatextual elements that the narration provides. Therefore, this chapter will argue that *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* is not a high dark fantasy novella by itself, or that, at least, does not adhere to the classical procedures of fantasy but instead base its belonging to the genre in relating to events of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. Furthermore, this chapter will compare and contrast *The Slow Regard of Silent things* with others, such as Brent Weeks' *Perfect Shadow* (2011a), and Jennifer McMurrain's *Heart of an Angel* (2016), to see the mechanisms that other novellas use to convey the sense of fantasy, and whether there are high dark fantasy novellas or not. In this case, the approach will be thematically and of genre studies.

2. Novella and Fantasy

Before exploring the connection between *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and Fantasy, a clarification on what a novella is should be stated. In terms of length, novellas are, usually, in between novels and short stories, as suggested by Scofield, “between about fifty and hundred and fifty pages (or 20,000 and 40,000 words)” (4). However, as Karfunkel states, “the length is more of a by-product of what the thing is trying to do, not the other way around” (n/p). McEwan notes that it is similar, in length, to a film script (n/p) and agrees with Karfunkel in that the

²⁵ An outline of the (otherwise brief) plot may be found in the introduction of this research.

²⁶ The question of alternate mindsets may prove interesting for gender issues, as will be suggested later.

connection between form and content is patent when considering length, rather than the former limiting the latter. Yet length fulfills a publishing role. In analyzing Don DeLillo's 117 pages novel *Point Omega: A novel*, Sands suggests that the significance of the subtitle lies in the publication: "Maybe the Don DeLillo book was subtitled that way because the publisher wants people to take it seriously despite how short it is. Maybe they consider novellas as minor work, so they want to classify the book as a novel so it will be considered a major work" (n/p). To him, therefore, the distinction between novel and novella is strictly a publishing characteristic: there is no length-related issue, but rather a publishing decision to brand a book a novel or a novella. *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, then, is a 159-pages book that has been published as a novella.

The aspect that defines the most the novella's writing style is its condensation in comparison to the novels and the short stories. As Karfunkel states, "A novella will usually have a plot, to be sure, but often has aspects that resemble *a character sketch*; short stories don't have room for character sketches, as they inherently get in the way of *plot*, which is what really governs short stories" (n/p, my emphases). In that suggestion, he also implies that characters drive novellas, rather than an overarching plot. An example of this can be found in Edmund White's recent *Chaos: A Novella and Stories* (Kern: n/p). The novella focuses on its main character, Jack, "an aging author, as he worries about the two defining topics of his life—money and sex" (n/p), to explore such topics and the differences between his views on it when he was young and when he was older. As his analysis suggests, there is no central plot, apart from it being an account of his life. In the end, "what holds the piece together is the charismatic reflections of Jack, who makes observations that please and amuse the culturally literate reader" (n/p). What these two analyses have in common is the particular concern of the novella with connecting with their reader.

McEwan further argues this when he states that there is an analogy between a novella and a film or a play, which the critic should note, for "there is an element of performance in the novella. We are more strongly aware of the curtain and the

stage, of the author as illusionist. The novella is the modern and post-modern form par excellence” (n/p). This may be the reason why *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* has a foreword from Patrick Rothfuss in which he states that the reader “might not want to buy this book” (Rothfuss, 2014a: Author’s Foreword), to then suggest a reading order of his storyworld: “My first two books are *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man’s Fear*. If you’re curious to try my writing, start there. They’re the best introduction to my world” (Author’s Foreword). With these two statements, Rothfuss (or, rather, a narrative voice that claims to be Rothfuss himself) projects their view on the whole storyworld and starts justifying the existence of the novel as part of a broader story (that is, Rothfuss’ narrative voice appeals to some metatextual elements that the reader may find in their text). With that, the reader is introduced into the storyworld: if they were newcomers, Rothfuss’ narrative voice suggests a way to which they may experience better, in Rothfuss’ narrative voice opinion, the storyworld, thus leading to a “felicitous” interaction between the emitter, the book, and the receptor, the reader.

Yet the narrative voice takes a turn and points their attention to the reader who knows the storyworld, by saying that “I think it’s only fair to warn you that this is a bit of a strange story. I don’t go in for spoilers, but suffice to say that this one is... different. It doesn’t do a lot of the things a classic story is supposed to do” (Author’s Foreword). The narrative voice is here agreeing with the critics mentioned above: a novella does not deal with an overarching plot, but rather focus on the characters, as some biography of them. However, the question arises when considering that, arguably, the whole *Kingkiller Chronicle* is a biography of sorts, with Kvothe’s adventures as the only thing that binds together the overarching plot. Furthermore, it is not always that the reader receives a brief defense on a book being branded as a novella. Whether that defense is a performance or not, the narrative voice leaves it unanswered.

To solve this, Clements, in “Anatomy of the Novella”, argues that, narratologically speaking, a novella has to provide four different characteristics that differentiate them from the novel: “the cornice” (4), “the days-nights unity” (7),

“the word length” (8), and the “thematic division” (11). Although his analysis focuses on medieval and Renaissance Italian novellas, I suggest translating the same four characteristics to the novella nowadays, for Clements’ view does not focus on specific themes or authors, and instead provides an underlying ground for the novella schematic enough to apply to other novellas (4-11). “The cornice” (4), the setting, including space, time, and related events, within which the novella occurs –normally an unhappy situation, although not always (4-5)– (4-7), is less interesting in the novella than in the novel, insofar as the high dark fantasy novella does not take it as a central point (4-11). This may produce a contrast between fantasy novellas and novels, insofar as they require a depiction of the setting. One of the resources that some works, such as *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, use is, precisely, including it within a bigger storyworld that is developed in the novels. That way, the novella gets narratological support by which readers can assume the depiction of the fantasy element, and would justify the warning that the Rothfuss-narrative voice does. The narration in the novella, Clements suggests, does not focus on the cornice itself, but rather in the development of the characters through such situation (4). Even when dealing with internal psychological procedures, the narration of the novella is more concerned about how the main character develops throughout the process than to how they solve it.

As Clements states, “along with the unity of place often supplied by the cornice, one usually finds in the *novella* collection a conscious unity of time” (7, emphasis in the original). Novellas, then, show a significant concern with their chronotope. If part of a saga, this is sometimes shown by stating where the narration is set within the storyworld, clarifying certain events from previous narrations, or laying the ground for events set in the future and thus working as a prequel. However, the concern with a precise time and place is not only made in comparison with other works, but also within the very novella: In *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, six of the thirteen chapters start stating that the day begins by a variation of “On the [first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth] day...” (37, 77, 79, 101, 123), or any variation implying the same.

Moreover, the whole novella (except for the Foreword and the Author's endnote) happens in Auri's home, the Underthing, below the University of Temerant. While there is no a clear explanation in the novella of where the narration takes place, apart from a series of names that Auri has given to the rooms –That is, there is no clue to locate the Underthing–, the reader may place the narrative comparing the clues that they can gather within the novella and in both *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear*. For instance, in the latter, there are several mentions to “Vaults” (2011a: 35), “Billows” (35), or even “Underthing” (35), which Kvothe situates under the University. The chronotope is made patent throughout the whole novella, by repeating the idea of time –“He would come for a visit on the seventh day” (2014a: 1), “he was coming on the seventh day” (50), “He wasn't coming till the seventh day” (64), or, finally, “He wasn't coming on the seventh day. He would visit her *today*” (134, emphasis in the original)– or space –the word “Here” is repeated in thirty-four occasions throughout the whole novella, and “Underthing”, twenty–. With that, the narration explicitly situates the story in a determined chronotope that is framed very explicitly: seven days in the Underthing.

It should be noted that, at least in this novella, when Clements states that the “lapse of time for the situation prompting the telling to run its course” (7) when considering verisimilitude –as well as space, although this is not explicitly stated–, this implies a more concise chronotope than the novels (7). That is, while a novel's chronotope may be as wide as the narrator wants, in a novella, this width may not be that ample. Furthermore, its focus on the characters makes the novella comprised within the chronotopic boundaries that its characters allow the narrator.

Word length is, in Clements' view, related to this conciseness: “Unity and verbosity are mortal enemies. Verbosity, moreover, would tempt an author to introduce moralizing and descriptive elements into his tale foreign to the ... tradition” (11). With this, Clements not only argues that word length in novellas derives from conciseness rather than the other way around, but also that these narrations are detached from both moralization and description (11). This argument has to do with the focus as well: if novellas were moralizing, then there would be

an overarching plot behind that justifies the existence of the narration itself, and adding descriptive elements may set the narration adrift (11). Novellas are, therefore, mostly pure narrative forms, self-justified in their characters. Clements argues that novellas first appeared in oral tradition (11), which would relate to the element of performativity that McEwan supports (“Some Notes on the Novella”), and therefore, its length should not be superior to the time that “a dry pilt birch log [takes] ... to be consumed by a blazing bivouac fire” (Clements: 11). It is this concise narratological act what reinforces the idea of performativity in the novella, something that is argued in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s storyworld when, as discussed in previous chapters, Kvothe states that there are teaching stories that the Edema share to bond and learn, implying that there are others which are not, that they are mere narrative acts. If we are to understand that the storyworld is suggesting that Kvothe’s story is, in fact, nothing more but a biographical note of which the reader would not learn anything, that is, a simple narrative exercise, and at the same time brandishing Kvothe’s story as a chronicle, and Auri’s as a novella, the storyworld would be, once more, blurring the lines between genres and writing styles, as it did before with the term fantasy. For the sake of simplification, in this dissertation, *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s main trilogy will be considered a series of novels.

Finally, for the thematic division of the novella, Clements argues that many of these productions deal with “peril averted by wit, through vicissitudes to good fortune, patience and perseverance rewarded, unhappy issues of love, happy issues of love, quick wit averting disaster, treasonable stratagems of wives, war of the sexes, love’s magnanimity ... *ad libitem*” (11, emphasis in the original). Although Clements speaks about the Renaissance and Middle Ages novella, these themes are, in essence, scenes that may appear in a contemporary novella, and thus being schematized of plausible and common situations within them. These appear as well in novels, but, in a novel, they appear as part of a plot, or to build it, and never self-justified by themselves. Thus, when a reader finds the theme of peril averted by wit in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s main trilogy, the reader assumes that such a thing

happens for a reason, because there is a plot behind that is developing, and thus, the narration needs a specific event to happen, whereas the novella is detached from that overarching obligation, and instead seeks to explore the character as its reason to exist.

Most of these themes do appear in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. One example of the aforementioned theme of “through vicissitude good fortune” (Clements: 11) appears in the first pages of the novella: when Auri prepares to bath in a “roiling pool of black water that swallowed the bottom of the spiraling stairs” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 7-9), she sees, at the bottom of the pool, a heavy nine-dented gear that calls her attention. She tries to get it but almost dies in trying to do so. After some other struggles within the pool, “She began to drown then. Mouth full of water, she choked and gagged” (18). Finally, she manages to take the gear (and herself) out of the water, but in so doing, she also loses Foxen, her lamplight. While resting after the adventure, by “heaving up half a stomachful of water on the stones ... [and] again, turning her head so that it didn’t splash against the bright brass gear” (19-20), for that would be wrong according to her, she realizes that the gear “was full of true answers and love and hearthlight. It was beautiful” (19). Not only that but also the bottle that contains Foxen returns to the surface of the pool. As the narrator notes, “It was well worth it, doing things the proper way” (21). The theme mentioned above is suggested very clearly through these actions, with a character that struggles and aims to do what she believes to be correct, and thus receiving compensation for it and good fortune. After the event and the struggle, Auri is left alive with the Gear and with Foxen without having lost anything or being drastically wounded.

The Slow Regard of Silent Things can be therefore called a novella, insofar as it possesses the four traits that Clements argues as inherent to the novella. Moreover, it is concerned with the very act of narration rather than any further moral or overarching plot, as will be developed in the next chapters. Yet it strikes questions about the whole notion of the genres. As it is a finished product that belongs to an unfinished saga, it is not worth speculating on whether *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s

main trilogy has or not an overarching plot more than has been done already, but it is worth noting that *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* belongs to *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld as a finished narration. It simply cannot be prolonged. If there were a new book on Auri's everyday nature, it would be a chronological sequel or prequel, but it would be, probably, detached from the scattered events that appear here, since it is self-justification what justifies its existence as a novella, thus, in that case, not being a saga, but a collection of novellas. *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, as well as other novellas, such as McMurrain's *Heart of an Angel* –or novella-like videogames, such as The Chinese Room's *Dear Esther* or Gayner's *Gone Home*–, is a pure narratological construction, devoted to the act of narration by itself. This suggests a connection with identity different from what a novel does, as their whole concern is, essentially, the narrative discourse, and therefore, focus on what we have been previously called the "Small story" (Bamberg, 2012: 23) analysis, that is, the novella focuses on the processes of identity building rather than the result. However, the connection between the novella and fantasy, and whether it affects or not the identity discourse conveyed in a narrative, still needs to be answered.

3. The Novella in Fantasy

When defining the characteristics that convey a high dark fantasy novel, this research argued that these are works whose framework is fictional and immersive, deeply enrooted in a cultural blend of Celtic and Nordic mythology, whose technological and social level could be regarded as medieval. Moreover, in these works, there is an immanence of the supernatural that permeates the narration, and it has characters whose moral code is both complex and patent and whose actions would be vital for reshaping the world. In addition, these works usually use a solemn tone, and its narrations often explore psychological dilemmas that tend to end well. The question arises, however, when these psychological dilemmas or the world-shaping are not the focus, as it happens in the novella. Therefore, by not

relying on an overarching plot, nor in the framework they are set, it is important to note how a high dark fantasy novella can be, in fact, modifying the traits that have been given to the high dark fantasy novel.

It should be noted that, arguably, novellas are more concerned on the focus of the narrations than the novel: by being pure narratological acts, the narration delves more into narratological elements such as focus, and therefore, all the attributes that have been argued here to define them as high dark fantasy novellas deal more with the focus of the narration rather than with elements that appear in the narration. It can be argued, for instance, that there are other elements in Weeks' *Perfect Shadow* in which the medieval tradition appears pervading the world-building, for example, the "Chateau Shayon" (n/p) where part of the story takes place, or the ka'kari, a set of magic objects which fulfill a huge role within the narrative (Agudo: n/p). There are, in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, other elements that define the technological level of the world in which is set if the reader stops to analyze, for instance, Auri's lantern, Foxen, which is, according to Fandom Books Community one of the following three things: "A mysterious and unknown animal with bioluminescent capabilities ... A colony of microscopic beings (such as bacteria or fungi) capable of bioluminescence while "feeding" on the chemical Auri drips into it ... [or] An alchemical object, such as a rock or metal that emits light in the presence of a reactor" ("Foxen": n/p). The thing that is relevant about Foxen's composition is that it exists in a world in which there is no electrical light, which forces Auri to use this unknown element that provides light while she walks through the Underthing.

As can be drawn from the previous paragraph, fantasy is deeply concerned with the framework and with world-building. It is not a simple matter of translation of such a framework that gives a novella its attribution as high dark fantasy or non-high-dark-fantasy novella since it is not a problem of the framework but, instead, a narratological concern. It could not be said, for instance, that the framework of the novella, the setting, is translated from an exterior environment to an inner setting. The setting needs to be conveyed with less wordiness, as argued above by Clements

(11), and therefore being somewhat recognizable by the reader, to the extent of perhaps being on the boundaries between high and low fantasy. In Weeks' *Perfect Shadow*, the reader receives a story that is set in the same storyworld than the story of the main trilogy (2009) but is not (allegedly) connected to it but for a few linking points until its final moments (n/p). With that, the narration suggests a narrative that does not exactly connect with the main trilogy, but instead develops the story of Gaelan Starfire, a farmer that is "also an immortal, peerless in the arts of war ... [that] must take a job hunting down the world's finest assassins for the beautiful courtesan-and-crimelord Gwinvere Kirena" (Weeks, 2011b: n/p). However, such a story relates to the main trilogy and provides insights on an important character of *The Night Angel's* trilogy, Durzo Blint, as well as some ideas on the ka'karis, magical artifacts that are relevant in the storyworld (n/p). Although the publishing and the several insights on the main trilogy may suggest using the novella as a support for understanding the main trilogy better, its value as a novella remains intact. However, its being considered a high dark fantasy novella relies more on belonging to that storyworld than on itself. That is, its world-building has been done through meta-textual elements that require that the reader reads the main trilogy to regard the novella as such. There is no point, for instance, in understanding that Gaelan is Durzo (n/p) without considering the events of the main trilogy. As Roth states, if the reader is "interested in reading a little more of Durzo (who here uses an older alias, Gaelan), then this is a very entertaining and worthwhile read" (n/d: n/p). With this, Roth raises the issue of the role that these novellas fulfill within the sagas. While they are, virtually, narration by themselves, some readers, such as Roth, perceive them as part of the storyworld given their brandishing.

With that brandishing, however, their primary existence as pure narrative productions arguably mixes with the overarching plot of the saga: when reading *Perfect Shadow*, many readers, like Roth, receive a different understanding of what happens in the main trilogy (n/d: n/p). This makes the novellas and the fantasy narratives to clash for the setting of fantasy, as well as many of the themes with which they deal, require in-depth exploration of the setting. As such, many fantasy

novellas are based on trilogies that supply the world-building that they necessarily lack by developing their narration through the characters rather than through the framework. Such a thing happens with *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*: while the reader does not need to understand where the narration is set, its reading clarifies the storyworld and provides a more precise point of view of what happens in the University without regarding Kvothe. Both main interpretations of the novella, in fact, may affect how the reader perceives the reliability of Kvothe's narration, as the novella could be, in one of its interpretations, giving veracity to Kvothe's account of the relationship that Auri and Elodin may have shared (Rothfuss, 2011a: 108) on the one hand, or, on the other, reinforcing the account on the relationship that Kvothe and Auri share.

McMurrain's *Heart of an Angel*, on the other hand, does not rely on a previously set storyworld and works as a standalone novella. Therefore, its connection with the setting is done differently, and instead of relying on many metatextual elements or verbose descriptions, it suggests its association with the world in which is set with a few words. The reader knows that Evangeline and Andrew Knight might come from the referential world because the latter sings songs related to places in it, such as "Ooooooklahoma, where the wind comes sweeping down the plain" (Ch. 5), or "Andrew Knight stumbled along the street signing an old Irish tune" (Ch. 1). The world-building of the novella, then, seems more connected with low fantasy than with the high dark fantasy definition. However, there is (and with a reason) a scarcity of fantasy novellas detached from a saga. While *Heart of an Angel* presents a mixed setting, where there is a real world to which the reader can relate as being the referential world, there is also a dream world, a world where Evangeline and Andrew travel, which could, in fact, include enough traits of high fantasy to belong to the tradition. This dream world is (briefly) sketched as a place in which both the technological level and the inclusion of Nordic and Western-related themes –such as the waterfalls, the clouds or the storm that puts an end to it (Ch. 7)– are enough to suggest this concern with detaching from the real world.

It can be argued, therefore, that the standalone fantasy novella could not be purely in an immersive world that completely detaches from the referential world, and instead relies on low fantasy techniques of including the supernatural within the referential world. In comparison, then, there is nothing genuine regarding world-building in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* compared to the main trilogy, since it all happens in places that have been (briefly) described before. These places are not treated from a world-building perspective but instead are suggested as the places where Auri lives, similarly to *Perfect Shadow*'s framework, and in contrast with the one from the *Night Angel Trilogy*. To what extent, then, these storyworlds are referential or not remains unanswered. Furthermore, the narrative voice of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* may tamper with the idea of fantasy or the supernatural, since it presents the point of view of Auri following her same discursive logic. The narration, thus, plays with both notions of fantasy when developing the world in which it happens, and presents fantasy both as a result of said trauma (which is shown, for instance, in Auri's consideration of inanimate objects and insects being, in fact, subjects that possess their own identity, voice, and opinion –like Foxen–) and as an epistemological detachment from the referential world in terms of setting through association with metatextual elements that appear in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s main saga. By blurring the boundaries between these two notions of fantasy, the narration explores both the psychological and the supernatural elements of the term and questions one of the principal premises of high dark fantasy: a referential element within a non-referential setting by making possible to completely disregard the latter and to debate the extent of referentialism of the former. That is, similarly to a high dark fantasy novel, the novella questions to what extent it is required that Auri is in Temerant and not in another world, to what extent the novella requires Temerant and the setting, and whether Auri is necessarily inherent to this world or not.

The elements that are unrelated to world-building but are more concerned with either the narration (such as the appearance of the supernatural or the solemn tone) seem to be constant within these novellas. *Heart of an Angel* uses dreams and

the presence of a supernatural creature that mixes Christian tradition with Nordic – a winged woman whose narration is mainly concerned with the potential death of a (mental) warrior– (McMurrain: n/p), and *Perfect Shadow* includes the ka'karis, which might connect to Western witchcraft, that is, pre-Christian cosmological notions, such as the Elements and the ability to master them (Kaldera: n/p)–. *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* does not include as many fantasy elements that relate to Celtic or Northern tradition in comparison to *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, but instead delves a bit more into some of them, such as Auri's aforementioned connection to the moon: Auri does not like the moon, and considers it her enemy of sorts, although she had been named "little moon Fae" (Rothfuss, 2011a: 35) by Kvothe. This aversion suggests contraposition against the traditional perspectives of faeries attraction to the moon. As Nevswift suggests, "the faeries were thought to be particularly active under the light of the full moon. On those brightly illuminated nights fairies, who lived in beautiful palaces under the sea, were said to come up on to the land to revel and converse with the fairies at fairy mounds and around hawthorn trees" (n/p). However, Auri fears it. When she faces it, she feels its "sharpness" (Rothfuss, 2014a: 64). To Auri, the moon is an entity capable of granting favors (143), but powerful enough to scare her away (63). Only when it is somehow half-hidden she enjoys her company, even to the point of using its light to her advantage:

Auri smiled at her, glad for the company now that she was no longer On Top of Things and Haven was far gone behind. Here on the edge of the clearing the moon showed acorns scattered on the ground. Auri spent a few minutes picking up the ones with perfect hats and tucking them into her gathersack. (69)

This quotation suggests that, although Auri is afraid of the moon, there is a connection between her, the moon, and the Irish Faerie tradition, which grounds the worldbuilding as both supernaturally pervaded (if what Auri believes about the moon is reliable) and Celtic-based. As such, the connection between the novella and the tradition from which it nurtures is suggested to go through a process of

serialization, in which readers are cued to read the main trilogy to understand the novella as belonging to the same storyworld.

There is not much regarding explicit morality in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, or, at least, is not present from a clear perspective. In comparison, the moral code that is present in *Heart of an Angel* is, perhaps, the less gray of the three examples that appear in this research. It is true that Evangeline sees her moral code constantly contested by Andrew, and that there are some moments in which she feels tempted to abandon it (McMurrain: n/p). However, her being an angel, and her fight with Mei suggests a moral polarization between good (guardian angels) and bad (Lucifer's fallen angels) (Ch. 15). However, in *Perfect Shadow* we find a better example of such gray moral code that is common in high dark fantasy: Gaelan Starfire starts the novella as a being that considers that killing is not wrong if he receives benefits out of it (Weeks, 2011a), but as the novella develops, the reader finds that Gaelan is looking for the murderer of his family (n/p). The final section of the novella is a moment of revelation for Gaelan, whose character becomes unemotional and cold after having a conversation with the ka'kari (n/p). This reaction stems from its starting to doubt that vengeance could be, in fact, justice: "What if the light [redemption and justice] itself had been a lie?" (n/p). After what seems, arguably, a traumatic experience, the novella offers some resolution to the moral dilemmas that Gaelan has been having before (n/p). In *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, moral complexity comes from the strange set of beliefs that Auri possesses, where Auri defines what actions are good and which actions are wrong. Since readers are unable to know whether such a set of beliefs stems from what has been called here a traumatic experience, or whether they were there before, these will be explored separately, even though traumatic experiences indeed imply certain ethic and moral-related issues.

The novella has a narrower scope when considering the impact of the character's actions in the world, or rather, since the chronotope is usually smaller than that of the novel, such actions are, in a way, generally more modest as well. Furthermore, and since the characters are involved not in an overarching plot, but

their development, these actions tend to be world-changing only to their perspective. In *Heart of an Angel*, even though Evangeline and Andrew deal with the supernatural embodied in Mei, a fallen angel, everything they do remains in the shadows and does not affect the continuity of the world (McMurrain: n/p). That is, the world in which the novella is set will not disappear if Andrew falls into Mei's schemes. However, during the narration, both Evangeline and Andrew learn, and their perspectives change, effectively shaping their world (n/p). The same could be said in the case of *Perfect Shadow*: while Gaelan Starfire's actions are slightly more world-shaping –appointed “head of the criminal empire”, (S.: n/p) Gwinvere (Weeks, 2011a: n/p), can be regarded as world-shaping–, the narration suggests that the climactic point of the narration is when Gaelan decides on the moral dilemma stated above. The final fight is not one against another character, but one that happens inside Gaelan: his acceptance and change of name to Durzo Blint (n/p). In the case of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, the narration suggests a deeper questioning of the notion of world-shaping and perspective, that may find its answer in having readers accept that there is not a single essential world, but instead personal views, which are in fact worlds. In such a way, readers can understand that the actions in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* are world-changing.

It is interesting to note that the expectation of a “happy ending” as has been mentioned in this chapter before changes when considering the novella as part of a saga or as a stand-alone document. *Heart of an Angel*, for instance, ends with Evangeline and Dantel (Andrew's real name) “on a private beach somewhere in the Pacific. The water was blue and cool, and palm trees swayed in the gentle breeze” (Ch. 16), in what seems to be an idyllic relationship between them. Moreover, Michael, Dantel's angelic boss with whom he argued, causing his falling (among other things), leaves them a note in which he asks them to “enjoy your vacation. Take as long as you like and then, when you are ready to come back to work, we will be ready for you both. You will work as partners, so you need not fear ever being apart again. God is shining His light upon you and your love” (Ch. 16), thus implying both Andrew's redemption and Dantel's reintegration within the angels.

The narration here is clearly suggesting its adherence to the tradition insofar as happy endings go, but the difference between *Heart of an Angel* and *Perfect Shadow* or *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* is its sense of closure, that is, the narration tends to be understood as an auto-conclusive text in *Heart of an Angel*, whereas in the other two novellas the narration is usually framed within the others. On the other hand, *Perfect Shadow*'s ending opens towards the storyworld from *The Way of Shadows* (2009) and the rest of the trilogy, in a moment in which Gwinvere offers the newly named Durzo Blint, as mentioned above, an essential character within the storyworld, a new contract: “‘Well, *Durzo*, I’ve got a job for you,’ Gwinvere says. ‘Someone who needs killing.’ ... He doesn’t look at the paper. He doesn’t take his eyes off of hers, mirroring him. He doesn’t care whose name is on the note. He doesn’t care what they’ve done. ‘I’ll take it,’ he says.” (2011: n/p, emphasis in the original). With that, the reader is suggested to read the main trilogy if they have not done so already, or to reconstruct their text about Durzo Blint after the new information they have received.

Something similar happens in Rothfuss’ novella: although readers can consider it a standalone novella, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*' final chapter, “Coda”, is vastly open. It seems like an interruption of the primary narration: “Deep in the Underthing, stones warm beneath her feet, Auri heard a faint, sweet strain of music” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 149). With that, the narration is connecting it with the main trilogy’s events (in one of its interpretations), or, at least, connecting the novella with some other story that is not explicitly mentioned. In short, where *Heart of an Angel* provides a happy ending, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* offers a final strain that connects it with other narrations. If the reader is to understand that the conclusion comes before the “Coda” (149) –that is, if they were to understand codas musically, as an added element that finishes rounding up the musical piece–, then the novella would stand alone by itself. However, by adding the coda, the narration diminishes the effect of closure and instead offers a link for the novella into the saga.

Furthermore, if the reader understands the “Author’s endnote” as part of the narration, as the frame in which the main narration takes meaning, it also leads to a connection for the novella into another framework, in this case, Patrick Rothfuss’ referential world: “Unfortunately, I’m out of time and out of space. So that story will have to wait until I write about it on my blog. If you’re interested, you can track it down there: <http://www.patrickrothfuss.com>” (159). With that, the reader is suggested to continue reading about the storyworld from a different perspective than Auri’s or Kvothe’s, the Patrick Rothfuss’ persona that appears in his blog.

4. Conclusions

All in all, this chapter has aimed to question whether the high dark fantasy novella is feasible or not apart from the publishing efforts that could be done to make it appear. As such, and after contrasting the characteristics that define a literary work as a high dark fantasy in novels and novellas, it could be concluded that many of them base their world-building in bigger sagas, as in the case of *Perfect Shadow* and *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, although that is not always the case, as *Heart of an Angel* suggests. Moreover, it has been argued that the novella, as a pure narratological work differs in scale and focus: while in novels the actions indeed shape the world, the lack of an overarching plot in the novella requires from it that such actions change perspectives towards the world, that is, that the world that has been changing is not the storyworld, but rather the inner world. With that, the novella rounds its definition as a purely narratological act. Furthermore, and as a distinctive trait of this type of literary works, the novella is usually concerned with performance, thus often presenting a narrator that acts within the narration. *Heart of an Angel* offers particular punctuation emphasis that makes the narrator noticeable, as Leveen suggests, by giving determined identity cues, such as italics for determined dialogues (n/p), for instance in “*do it*” (McMurrain: Ch. 1, emphasis in the original) or “*the Enquirer*” (Ch. 5, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, the novella adds the beginning of a second story as a teaser of another novella,

which reinforces the conceptualization of the story as a fictional work with a clear beginning and an end. The commonality of these techniques to make the narrator noticeable, techniques that appear both in the novels and in this novella, suggests a more accessible way to indicate this feature by the narrator. *Perfect Shadow* takes a slightly different approach to this phenomenon. Within its pages, the first-person narrator, allegedly Acaelus/Gaelan/Durzo, or even “nameless” (Weeks, 2011a: n/p), swaps to third-person narration and back, passing through second-person, making itself patent for the reader throughout the whole novella. For instance, in the beginning, the narrator states: “This was to be my first kill for hire. It’s good to start with the impossible. Make a name for myself. Enter with a splash” (n/p), implying his identity, the man that used to call himself Acaelus. However, right after the scene on the assassination, the narrator changes to third-person narration and states that “Gaelan had met great beauties before. The truth was, most of the encounters left him convinced that people were idiots” (n/p). The second-person narrator, however, uses italics to make itself visible: “*So Gaelan ... What will the dirt-farmer-turned-war-hero do? Who will you be now? Who will you be next?*” (n/p, emphasis in the original). The mixture of narrators is patent even to the point of mixing both first and third-person narrator: “*I’ve known Irenaea Blochwei and Ihel Nooran. No doubts. ‘So?’ he said instead*” (n/p, emphasis in the original). Regardless of reliability, or the numerous issues that could be drawn here in terms of identity and trauma, the narrator is making itself patent, forced to interact in all three voices to suggest to the reader that it is there, controlling what appears in the narrative and what not, thus performing and tacking Durzo’s inner world and the storyworld together. Finally, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* makes the performance explicit both in the Foreword and the Afterword. The testimony of a narrator named Patrick Rothfuss enhances the sense of performativity that the novella possesses. By acknowledging the novella as “a strange *story* ... [that] doesn’t do a lot of the things a *classic story* is supposed to do” (Rothfuss, 2014a: Author’s Foreword, my emphasis), the narrator is suggesting the development of the novella as something that will be different from other stories, that its performance, the way to get

knowledge from it, will not be the same as a classic novel, thus reinforcing the novella's focus on display.

It should be noted, finally, that in this study of the high dark fantasy novella there is no consideration of the reliability of the narrator as a general issue: both in *Perfect Shadow* and *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* there is a tendency to understand both narrators as unreliable, the former because of his ability to lie – “Everyone thinks they're special. It's what makes lying so easy” (Weeks, 2011a: n/p)– and the latter because of how Auri expresses herself, or, instead, makes discursively patent her alternate mindset, that, against the traditional omniscient third-person narrator, could even suggest that the main story's narrator (the one that tells the story of Auri) is Auri herself using third-person narrative style, as the reader knows of no other subject living in the Underthing and thus capable of telling the story, if the same analysis of the main trilogy's external narrator is done for this one.

Chapter 5: Trauma and Identity in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and the Core Novels

Auri sat for a moment in the dark. It had been like this before sometimes. Not for a long time now, but she remembered. She had been sitting like this, empty as eggshell. Hollow and chest-heavy in the angry dark when she'd first heard him playing. Back before he'd given her sweet new perfect name. A piece of sun that never left her. It was a bite of bread. A flower in her heart.
(Rothfuss, 2014a: 80)

1. Introduction

This chapter will explore the notion of trauma and its application to *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. To do this, the chapter will first briefly review the idea of trauma and its ontology. Afterward, it will study the relation that trauma and identity share in terms of identity building. Finally, this chapter will consider the application of it regarding characters and fiction (particularly high dark fantasy fiction). With this, and in connection to what has been studied in section I regarding the link between identity and narratology, this chapter will argue that the narrativity of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* is deeply concerned with the notion of trauma and the differences between narratological and to question if there are any similarities to identitarian processes regarding a character able to overcome trauma (allegedly, Kvothe) versus one that seems to be unable, Auri.

2. Ontology of Trauma and Trauma Studies for Fiction

The concept of trauma has been under the scope in the last thirty years. Trauma can be defined, in the same way as many other definitions that have been given here, as a narratological construct that explains and encapsulates a series of

experiences that alter what is culturally defined as a normal psychological development (Herman, 1992: 33). Herman specifies this and states that “Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke the responses of catastrophe” (33). With that, Herman hierarchizes trauma as a more significant category of misfortunes, but each term related to the other, that is, traumas cannot be positive in her view. Thus, a situation that breaks with the culturally normal psychological development, or even impedes it in a culturally-regarded positive way –such as, for instance, the sudden change of class and prestige that appears in Twain’s narration of Tom Canty, from *The Prince and the Pauper*– would not be a traumatic experience.

Kirmayer, Lemelson, and Barad add another layer of definition to trauma. To them,

The metaphor of trauma draws attention to the ways that extremes of violence break bodies and minds, leaving indelible marks even after healing and recovery. But the notion of trauma has been extended to cover a vast array of situations of extremity and equally varied individual and collective responses. Trauma can be seen at once as a sociopolitical event, a psychophysiological process, a physical and emotional experience, and a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering. (1)

With that, they add three factors to trauma: first, that trauma implies a violent breaking, either physical or psychological, that scars an individual even after healing (4-6). Second, that trauma also applies to an extreme situation that changes depending on a society, thus suggesting that the Western notion of trauma regarding a determined physical or psychological injury may be different in other cultures (6), and, third, that Traumas are a collective vision of a particular event, that there are no traumas in isolation (13). It is only through differentiating one’s situation from the other that trauma is made evident. These factors enhance the understanding of

trauma as a narratological rationalizing method since its understanding requires distinguishing between a subject and another. In their words, “Trauma names a type of situation or outcome, not a discrete disorder or single pattern of injury and response ... [it] is not a natural category but a culturally constructed way to mark out certain classes of experiences and events” (4). This suggests that, effectively, traumas are motivated by a particular situation, but only exist –narratologically speaking– as a remembrance of a previous situation (4), that is, as an “outcome”, rather than the experience by itself, which is why this research will study it along with memory.

Dwyer and Kaffman, in the tenth edition of the *Kaplan & Sadock's Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, edited by Sadock, Sadock, and Ruiz, argue that “rodent models of depression and PTSD typically employ some form of chronic, unpredictable, or severe stress that leads to despair, avoidance, and anhedonic-like behaviors” (1091), and that such rodents “provide reasonable models of human depression and PTSD” (1091). As such, the notion requires its experiencer to feel, either culturally or naturally, a sensation of “helplessness” (1091). As has been previously suggested, memory includes specific elements that are not narratologically describable but as ineffable experiences, as argued by Abrams when stating that “Survivors of trauma can find it difficult or impossible to tell of their experience because they are unable to find the language or the narrative structures to convey that experience” (105). As such, the event that produces the trauma may (or may not) be translated to words, and so can be the sensations that produced on its experiencer, but the only way to understand its effects on the emitter is through empathic psychological processes.

From the previous sources (Abrams; Kaplan and Sadock), it can be assumed that trauma implies three different elements: the event, the outcome, and the person’s psychological reaction towards it. This reaction, nonetheless, is directed through the breaking with the psychosocial discourse. It is narratologically ineffable, thus, but only (or rather, precisely) because it disrupts the discourse that the person experiencing the trauma regards as valid (that is, trauma is not

necessarily true, but is relevant to the experiencer). Relational frame theory explores this as well. Relational frame theory is a psychological theory that argues that “Our common-sense understanding of an event also includes a sense of the purpose, meaning, and function of the event, and all of these depend on past events—or the historical context of the present event” (Fox: n/p). With this, relational frame theory explores the discursivity of Western psychological processes, which, in connection with cognitive poetics, serves to explore further the notion of trauma employing no-discourse. In both disciplines, the idea of trauma is suggested as what cannot be, but is, or, in other words, a process that includes a component of breaking with the current understanding of Western discursive tools. Its existence, then, is subject to its “no narration” (Husvedt: 7), or, instead, to its conflict with linguistic approaches towards it.

The question that arises, then, is how a work of literary fiction deals with the notion of trauma if trauma is, as has been stated, logically impossible to translate entirely into words. Trauma fiction, a term that Anne Whitehead uses (3) requires a pact between the reader and literary work that, although “often demands of the reader as suspension of disbelief” (84), works differently: Not only the reader has to believe that the story is true whatsoever the events, but also that their narrative voices, if traumatized, are assuming events that they are unable to narrate (as suggested in 84). In other words, the reader must acknowledge the psychosocial network upon which the narrative voice relies. They may do so through the Rhetoric of Negation, as it happens in *The Name of the Wind*: When asked about his pain about having seen his whole family die and their murderers laugh at him and threaten him with the same fate, Kvothe instead asks his student:

“What, Bast? Should I weep and tear my hair? Curse Tehlu and his angels? Beat my chest? No. *That is low drama.*” His expression softened somewhat. “I appreciate your concern, but this is just a piece of the story, not even the worst piece, and I am not telling it to garner sympathy”. (Rothfuss, 2008: 120, my emphasis)

His associating it with “low drama” as he says, suggests this notion of fictional works aiming to translate to their worlds the idea of trauma: in his mindset, low drama requires cursing the supernatural for his fate, which implies that high drama takes a worldlier approach, but in any case, its being drama recognizes cursing’s psychological nature (that is, cursing as a form of swearing, as a form of expressing emotions). Instead of offering an answer—that he, on the other hand, is (if trauma is ineffable) unable to offer, since neither high nor low drama can express the trauma itself, even when relying upon the rhetoric of negation—, he turns to philosophy. Instead of explaining the pain he suffered, Kvothe goes on explaining the processes by which his mind went to recover from such a vision, arguing that “Classic thinking teaches us of the four doors of the mind, which everyone moves through according to their need” (123). In so doing, the narration ratifies the irrationalizability of trauma: a narrative voice can explain the processes, can say that he slept, forgot, went mad or died (123), and can express how a body that has gone through a traumatic experience reacts, but there is not, in the Western world, a discourse for trauma, because what traumas effectively do is to break with narrativity. In so doing, traumas appear as the no-discourse, as the element that does not appear, but its non-appearance makes it visible. If pain is rationalizable, it is not traumatic.

The metaphor that appears to represent this lack of rationalization in *The Name of the Wind* is the one of mind-shattering, as in other narrative products—such as the White Wolf’s *Vampire: The Masquerade* narratives where the symbol of the Malkavian, the mad clan, is a shattered mirror (see, for instance, Greenberg’s *Clanbook, Malkavian*)—. In Kvothe’s words, when defining Auri, he states that “She didn’t like the open sky, or bright lights, or people. I guessed she was some student who had gone *cracked* and run underground before she could be confined to Haven” (Rothfuss, 2008: 353, my emphasis). The idea of a person’s mind cracking under the university pressure—“It is because of what we study. Because of the way we train our minds to move” (311)—, despite not being original, acquires a new sense under the light of the discourse that the story emphasizes: it is not a simple

metaphor, but instead, the narration both suggests a breaking on the character's discourse and effectively produces said breaking in the narrative, as it is unable to reproduce it.

Thus, in studying the notion of trauma, identity as discourse is further reinforced through memory. Memory, as argued by Laney and Loftus, "does not record a continuous, accurate photographic copy of events or experiences" (8). After that, they say that "memories are changeable over time; that is to say, they are not fixed or perfect copies of experience but undergo repeated revision and transformation with each attempt at recollection" (8). That is to suggest that memory is rewritten, in every instance of its being recalled. As such, it can be argued that its discursive form may have a narrative structure, and therefore be analyzed by the same tools that have been used to study the identitarian discourse. The relationship with the traumatic experience, then, can be translated into discursive form as well, but only after several rewritings in which the experiencer of the traumatic event manages to produce a narrative of it. However, the narrative is, yet again, unable to present the psychological breaking and pain of the person that experienced the traumatic event. Understanding and acknowledging that breaking requires a connection between readers and experiencers that goes beyond words, and instead, appears cognitively.

In short, trauma can be regarded as a metaphor of a narratological reconstruction of the self that, as inferred from before, comprises three different elements: the first one is the event itself, which can be both physical and/or psychological but must be regarded as an enormous misfortune by the experiencer to which it needs to recover. As such, and as Blake suggests, situations like the realization mentioned above that Harry Potter is a wizard (Rowling: 39), cannot be regarded as a traumatic experience (Blake: 75), since both the narrative voice and Harry consider the event something that is both exciting and interesting, and the (short) time of reconstruction comes not from recovery from a psychological or physical wound, but rather from the inclusion on Harry's pragmatikós of an element from his allós (that is, rebuilding his epistemology, not healing). That is not the case

in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, where the origin of the trauma (that is, the moment in which Auri's epistemology suffers an alteration that, the narrative voice suggests, requires healing) is not explicitly stated anywhere in the novella. After the event, there is a process of reconstruction or healing in which the experiencer recalls the incident and reconstructs it mentally through different methods –in *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* storyworld case, the four options to recover from trauma are either sleeping, forgetting, maddening or dying, as stated above (Rothfuss, 2008: 123)–, to re-produce a new self that is capable of coping with the event that has happened. The third element would be the discourse of pain, which is, again, ineffable, and requires a psychosocial pact between the experiencer and the reader to understand it (Whitehead: 34). As an extreme situation of distress, it is in trauma where the relationship between narrative voice and narratee is made more robust, as here is where the communicative pact between them must rely not only on what appears in the narration but also on what does not.

The previous paragraph does not imply, however, that this bond only exists when trauma occurs, but instead that it is here where this pact is patent to the extreme. By studying trauma, therefore, the narratological connection between narrative voice and narratee is made visible, even when there is no possible explicit discourse of pain, because of the implication that narratees exercise if they are to understand the narration as a traumatic experience. If we were not to understand Kvothe's family murdering as a traumatic experience, the narrative voice's mental processes would seem exaggerated, and its radical change and aim to run away from his memories (Rothfuss, 2008: 123-126) could be regarded as an entirely legitimate "low drama".

Trauma does also include a feeling of impossibility: part of its powerfulness is drawn from the experiencer's inability to cope with the event by itself (as argued in Kaplan and Sadock: 1091), not only because of its magnitude but also because traumatic experiences appear as something scarce for the experiencer. It affects experiencers of it because they did not expect that to happen, and the notion of rarity goes against the sense of normalization or narrative plausibility that, at least in

Western countries, pervades the psychosocial atmosphere. *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* suggests, as will be seen later, such a sense of impossibility, both in the story and in the way this story appears.

3. Trauma and Identity

To support the argument of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* exploring the elements mentioned in the section above, trauma and identity (which, as was argued before, is at the core of the novella) should be connected. This section of the chapter will attempt to suggest the different ways in which a traumatic event links to the identity of the traumatized self. To do so, first, there will be an exploration of various sources that focus on the connection between trauma and identity. Then, these will be applied to the two main characters that experience a traumatic experience within the storyworld, Auri and Kvothe.

As has been previously suggested, trauma can be considered as a disruption of the identity-building process, or as a highlighting point on such a process that the identitarian text includes within itself. It can be regarded, therefore, as one of the key motivators of a particular identity. However, the connection between these two factors goes both ways logically, since one's regarding a traumatic experience relies solely on that person's specific epistemology and identitarian text. By stating that trauma is a disruption on a person's identitarian text, its perception is entirely subjective and subject to psychosocial interpretation.

As Berman states, "Traumatic events ... can disrupt these plans and alter our lives in unpredictable and sometimes permanent ways. One who defines herself in regard to her relationships and life roles ... may be forced to reevaluate those roles. Life goals may change when years of work and struggle toward a dream are wiped away in an instant... [and v]alues and beliefs about the world may be shattered by certain events" (1). With that, Berman suggests that the changes that trauma provoke are ingrained in the traumatized one's perception of itself. The breaking

that produces in the identitarian discourse provides a new discourse that can be completely dissociated from any previous discourse, even to the point of detaching it from the previous societal values that sustained it, as is the case, for instance, of madness. This could be translated to the Foucauldian argument that both madness and reason are interchangeable depending on the context in which these words were used (as suggested in Foucault: xi), to which researchers “must renounce the convenience of terminal truths” (viii), but that would be an over-simplification. Instead, an identitarian discourse produced by a traumatic experience that detaches its experiencer from societal values (ranging from none to all of them) should be considered as a complex state of relationship between a previous conceived reality (in which the traumatic experience should never have happened) and the new one that can be completely different from it. Mental illness, therefore, can be regarded as an umbrella term through which society can refer to a series of psychological disconnections with society (as suggested in Patel: n/p), that are perceived as harmful, be it because of social inability or because they produce physical –or psychological– damage to a self, within which several experiencers of trauma are included.

In short, and as Patel suggested, trauma is sometimes regarded as a mental illness where the experiencer’s mental discourse breaks. That does not mean, however, that these selves do not have an identitarian discourse, nor that their identitarian discourse cannot be analyzed, as long as these are discourses that language can express. Instead, these discourses can be explored with the same tools with which this dissertation has been exploring other identitarian discourses, and therefore, can be regarded as similar, instead of requiring different considerations for their study. As Berman suggests, “trauma can affect one’s sense of identity, which in turn could lead to posttraumatic distress or posttraumatic growth” (2), and although his research focuses on the medical aspects of trauma, these discourses are effectively identitarian, and the traumatic experience is the central element that defines a post-traumatic identitarian discourse.

Trauma does not only affect the personal sphere of a being (that is, it is not only a conception of the self what can be potentially modified): By breaking with a conceived and socially accepted reality, the personal identity of the self may alter its social sphere, not only in terms of how to deal with said sphere but instead making the experiencer of a traumatic situation potentially going again through the social processes of identification, belonging and enhancement that have been studied previously (see pages 44-53).

Haliburn also argues that “when we look at identity we actually have to, according to some authors, describe three dimensions: continuity, coherence and distinctiveness” (28), and that these three dimensions are specifically interesting regarding our assessment of traumatized experiencers (28). These three dimensions would stand for a sense of continuity of the experiencers’ existence. For instance, the whole story of Kvothe as a single narration indicates the capacity of Kvothe to identify himself as both the previous Kvothe and the Kvothe that tells the story – although he acknowledges differences between them (Rothfuss, 2008: 44). The reader, however, does not receive any explicit connection between Auri before her appearing for the first time to Kvothe, and therefore is unable to assess whether she is continuously linked to her past or not. It is suggested, however, that her relationship with the past is problematic, since she, paraphrasing Kvothe, does not want to cope with anything from her past, even her name (353). The second dimension, coherence, stands for “being able to see ourselves in varied roles, beliefs, ideologies, and being part of an integrated whole” (Haliburn: 28). Identitarian coherence, therefore, suggests a capacity of being something apart from merely being, and add new words to the identitarian discourse. It is not only that a being is, but also that it can be whatever they are. For instance, Kvothe’s coherence in his identitarian discourse, as mentioned earlier, stands for all the events he tells as related to him: he is an innkeeper, and that is coherent with the events that the chronicle has developed.

Similarly, he considered himself a trouper, and that is coherent with his discourse due to his origin as Edema Ruh. However, Auri’s coherence is suggested

as slightly different, for she seems to respond to a different mindset than any other from the storyworld. Moreover, she rarely mentions any personal detail but by rejection: there is no explanation to her fearing the moon, but she is afraid of it, as mentioned above, nor there is any explanation regarding her living under the University after whichever traumatic event she experienced, not in the novella nor in the main trilogy, so the reader is unable to consider her coherence between previous Auri and the Auri present in the novella.

However, there is a sense of coherence in what can be called post-traumatic Auri, as she is suggested to feel as belonging to her conception of the world. Auri's coherence stems from her considering herself as an agent that tries to organize the universe. Auri judges every situation according to a determined mindset in which things being where they belong is good, and disturbances and displacement are wrong. For instance, at the beginning of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, Auri's narrative voice states that "Nothing was nothing else. Nothing was anything it shouldn't be" (Rothfuss, 2014a: 3), and "She knew perfectly well where this sheet belonged" (35). Auri's perception of the world responds to a sense of belonging and being, rather than order and seeming, that is, there is a single definition for a being, and its wording does not shape its definition. That seems to contrast with Kvothe's reliability, whose narration contains lies, gossip, and intended misunderstandings. The novella suggests this contrast stylistically as well: where Kvothe is clear but word-concerned, Auri's narrative voice is cryptic and concerned with her way of considering the world that surrounds her. As such, the narration makes a point not against the medical aspects of trauma, but against its medicalization: Auri is not a mentally ill patient; Auri is a character regarded as mentally ill in a world where her mindset, her way of being, is regarded as abnormal, inexplicable.

The third dimension, distinctiveness is defined by Haliburn as follows: "While we are composed of many selves, we have a continuity and coherence between oneself and the other and a distinctiveness, each of us sees ourselves as being different or separate from the other" (28). With that, she argues for something similar to what has been discussed previously regarding social distinction but

applying it to personal identity. This distinctiveness is explicitly apparent in Kvothe's case, as he is continually differentiating between other beings and himself, not only by using standard pragmatic tools such as the use of the first person singular pronoun but also with sentences where the difference is explicitly marked. When talking about love affairs, for instance, Kvothe states that "Like all boys of my age, I was an idiot when it came to women. *The difference between me and the others* is that I was painfully aware of my ignorance, while others like Simmon bumbled around, making asses of themselves with their clumsy courting" (Rothfuss, 2008: 426, my emphasis). These sentences suggest Kvothe's consideration of others not only as different beings but also as structurally different since they do not share his role or his abilities.

The marked sentence also seems to suggest that his ability to differentiate is based on the clarity with which the identitarian discourse is formed. On the other side of the spectrum, Auri's discourse of identity is based not on her considerations of other beings, but on, allegedly, the universe's conception of being, to the point of understanding that she is the one that has mistakenly considered something a being instead of it being something different, such as the fact that Fulcrum is three things instead of one: "Oh. Oh. Oh. Of course. It wasn't *something* she was looking for. No wonder all her searching was for naught. No wonder everything was canted wrong. It was *three* things" (2014a: 134, emphasis in the original). In short, her distinctiveness, her considering something as not her, relies solely on her view of the order of the universe, rather than on her regarding herself as a different being. To that, Haliburn has an answer based on trauma: "people who have been affected by trauma [have a] reduced capacity for self-reflectivity" (28), self reflectivity being a "capacity to reflect on oneself and the effect that one has on other people" (28). If we apply such a term to both Kvothe and Auri, then the former is a perfect example of a strong self-reflectivity, whereas Auri seems to be a character that is easily manipulated by her own vision of the world, as can be seen in previous examples. This apparent conundrum regarding her possible gullibility is not so when acknowledging that Auri considers such ideas not as hers, but rather as part

of an external organization of the universe against which she does not have any power, as will be explored later.

What Haliburn suggests when taking these three characteristics into account when assessing an identitarian discourse is that if any of these is lacking, an identitarian discourse might have been broken or mutated into another one, with the potential risk of dissociation, as she states: “They feel a diminished sense of freedom and alienation. They experience a loss of trust in the environment ... when people are traumatised they call into question human relationships and experience a loss of trust in those who have the power to make their living situations or social environment better” (29). That can apply to both Kvothe and Auri: while Kvothe, as stated above, can recover from his traumatic experience after some time distrusting society as a whole and secluding himself in the forest, Auri ultimately doubts anything related to human society and is unable to function socially within the storyworld, only interacting with few people within the storyworld, as mentioned before. This sense of dissociation, therefore, seems vital in understanding the traumatic processes with which Auri has dealt, as well as critical in discerning the main element concerning her being the experiencer of an unnamed traumatic event.

Trauma is used differently in the main trilogy and the novella. While *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear* explore the development of a male character after a traumatic experience (and who is able to overcome it, given the characteristics we have defined for said recuperation), as has been seen earlier, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* presents a depiction of an, allegedly, traumatized female character. In this sense, the traumatic experience is not the motor that develops the action, but rather, the essential trait that the novella develops regarding identity. It is not what motivates the activities, but what drives the whole perception of the world by Auri. Every action that appears in the novella is not part of a trauma overcoming (which could be the case, at least potentially, of Kvothe's actions), but instead, are produced by the trauma, or rather, the change in the identity discourse that the traumatic experience has produced in the focalized character. By not being

a narrative that develops events, but a depiction of a character, trauma is not used as a trope to further the exploration, but the explored issue, even when the traumatic experience is not depicted at all, at least explicitly, and instead, it seems to be up to the reader to find clues regarding that experience. However, by stating the narration as a novella and agreeing on defining it as such, it seems unnecessary to discern the traumatic experience to grasp Auri's character. It is not that much the experience, but her personality what the narration explores. Thus, the idea is not to focus on what caused the alterity, but rather the outcome. In short, by not focusing on trauma's development, but on herself as a character, Auri becomes the center of the novella. Furthermore, by becoming central to the experience of the novella, her place within the storyworld is not only marked but also needed. Auri becomes essential for the creation of the readers' textual representation of the storyworld, insofar as she appears as a protagonist within it.

4. Trauma within the Storyworld

The question that arises now is how all of the ideas above regarding identity and trauma apply in the construction of the novella. As has been previously intuited, for a reader to consider a character as traumatized, an element of empathic connection is required in which the reader acknowledges the situation as plausibly traumatic for the character (Whitehead: 36). At the same time, however, some psychological elements of post-traumatic events compromise narrative reliability: if, for instance, characters are not able to remember the traumatic event that shaped their new identity, or unwilling to recognize it, the question that arises is whether a reader is capable of acknowledging that the characters that they are reading about are traumatized characters or not. Furthermore, since some narrative voices do not clearly state their traumatized condition, another question may be asked, which is whether a reader can be sure of their interpretation of such characters. The case of Auri in *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* storyworld is one of this cases, as there is never an explanation of why she behaves like that –and, for all that the reader knows,

apart from the cryptic comment that Elodin provides regarding studying at the University as a maddening event for some characters (Rothfuss, 2008: 311), she might have been like that before coming to the University–, and the reader is suggested to imagine different ways by which the character has become traumatized.

To provide this sense of traumatic experience and traumatized character, narratives need to offer a feeling of normalization. Normalization, in this sense – similar to the one used by Bronston in 1974, but applied to literature–, can be defined as a narratological device by which the reader is presented with a contrast between the pragmatikós and the character/event in question (490-516). That is to say, for instance, that before Kvothe starts his story, the narration uses an intradiegetic framework by which the reader acknowledges the traumatic event as something exceptional. While this is not exclusive of Trauma Fiction (Whitehead: 3), it is a necessary characteristic for it. What normalization does in a narrative experience is to provide a framework by which the reader can rely on characters’ opinions regarding the exceptional, either positive or negative, of a situation, and therefore be able to empathize with the traumatized character. This normalization can be done, occasionally, by presenting as well certain elements that both the storyworld and the reader’s world share, such as physical/psychological traits, typical situations in both worlds (such as children acting like children) or translating customs from the reader’s world into the storyworld. In terms of trauma within the storyworld, what normalization does is, therefore, to offer a background to which the reader can refer when assessing a situation as traumatic or not. This connects with what has been stated earlier regarding the exceptional nature of trauma: narratologically, traumatic experiences appear scarcely within a narration, if more than once (not so the way the experiencer copes with it, which may be, as could be the case of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, the main motor behind a narrative).

Hsu argues that normalization is a common process that “resides in the way that we speak, in the ideas that get refined and reworked and encoded in ordinary words until they seem harmless enough” (n/p). To him, normalization is an ongoing

mental process that works through repetition (n/p). The cognitive poetic connotation of this suggests that the reader of a book needs to have an intentionally normalized situation repeated over and over until it loses its abnormal trait, although this does not mean that this process must be explicit. For instance, there is no need to normalize human beings in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld because they follow the same definition as human beings do in the reader's referential world. On the other hand, several instances of the book expressly explain sympathy, which suggests its normalization. Hsu also suggests that normalization depends exclusively on the reader since it depends on the readers' "ability to reason" (n/p) and that it is based on "questions of feasibility" (n/p). With that, the notion of normalization connects to the suspension of disbelief (as understood in Coleridge: n/p), as the reader pacts with the narration in considering that what is appears as standard is, in fact, normal within the intradiegetic world. The connection between normalization and trauma is evident: for a situation to be read as traumatic, both the experiencer and the reader must be able to see how such a situation is neither normal nor normalized.

However, Hsu also expresses that there is a certain kind of trauma normalization: his example talks about the normalization of violence after 9/11 in media, especially in the United States ("What Normalization Means"), but this could easily apply to fiction, especially fantasy fiction, which tends towards physical violence. In his words, he states that "What we think of as normal shapes our field of vision; it tells a story of the world and its possibilities. Racism, sexism, and the other hatreds and phobias lately on display ... They've always been normal — for some of us. For those of us who long had to get used to these things, what is now being called normalization is merely a form of the resignation that attends life and its possibilities" (n/p). That is to say that traumatic experiences such as those, or terrorism, or others, depending on how normalized a situation is within society. Death, or rather, War, for instance, is not traumatic in *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 2001). Similarly, *Game of Throne*'s Oberyn Martell's assassination ("The Mountain and the Viper") is not traumatic (at least within the storyworld) save its

grittiness, but only because the audience has not seen sir Gregor that visceral before—that is, Oberynd dying is not traumatic, but Oberynd dying because Sir Gregor “crushes his skull with his bare hands” (Ricoletti) is, even within the storyworld—.

The approach that *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* does regarding trauma is different, however. It is not through explicitly stating the traumatic experience that the reader gets the image of Auri being traumatized, but instead, by conveying an alternate mindset, the reader might get the idea of Auri having experienced a traumatic situation that isolated her from society, as has been suggested here. Such an alternate mindset, of course, should be taken into account by observing the most prominent first-person narrative voice within the storyworld, Kvothe, and his mindset. By establishing the contrasts between both voices, it can be argued that Auri’s is alternate, not normalized, neither by Kvothe nor, for all the reader knows, anyone from the storyworld.

The Kingkiller Chronicle’s storyworld suggests normalization as a way to debate with the reader about different mindsets, and that is what *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* effectively does, to normalize Auri’s mindset. By presenting Auri’s train of thoughts instead of any other character’s, the novella puts to question several normalized ideas (such as non-living beings able or not to possess an identity, or a different perception of everything that surrounds Auri in contrast to what Kvothe tells the reader in the main trilogy) and instead presents a character that, due to her trauma, detaches herself from society’s normalized mindset. In this case, thus, Auri’s trauma does not only break with her previous self (allegedly) but also breaks with what the reader has received as the normalized mindset in Temerant, quite similar to the one in the reader’s referential world.

By doing this, the novella reflects not only on normalization but also on the idea of trauma. Blake, supported by Vickroy, argues that trauma fiction is a type of fiction in which readers have to side either with the traumatized or with the traumatizer based on what they read, the moral considerations of good and evil of such an action, and the notion of weakness that the traumatized implies (Blake: 68-

69). Despite the schematic definition, by extracting such points and applying them to the novella one could argue that a trauma novella would, therefore, be the one in which, by exploring a character's psyche, the reader needs to examine the mindset of a traumatized person, even when not explicitly stating the traumatic experience by itself. The definition mentioned above must be regarded with caution, as it relies more on the literary work rather than on the text, but if the reader considers the whole of *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* storyworld as the text (that is, that the novella is not an isolated narration, but instead that it is part of a more significant narration), the definition fits more comfortably. The extent to which the novella, for instance, presents horrible events is shaped by the fact that Auri's mindset and focalization show some "normal" circumstances as traumatic –such as waking up (Rothfuss, 2014a: 77)– whereas it shows some supposedly traumatic events as normal –such as the almost-dying situation between pages 13 and 19–. To suggest this, Brandy Ball Blake states that "the experiences of the heroes can help readers to understand the complexity and horror involved with trauma" (69). In the case of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, Auri's mindset serves this purpose. For instance, the fact that Auri's mindset is different is suggested in the following excerpt:

She spread the tangle out by the edge of the pool: an old belt with a silver buckle so tarnished it was black as coal. A leafy branch with a bewildered snail. And, lastly but not least, looped on a piece of rotten string all tangled with the branch, was a slender key as long as her first finger. Auri kissed the snail and apologized before setting the branch back in the water where it belonged. The leather of the belt was turned against itself, but at the slightest tug the buckle came away. Both of them were better off that way. (Rothfuss, 2014a: 14)

This paragraph condenses three different elements that characterize Auri's mindset as distinct from other characters' ones. The first and most apparent is Auri's concern with the feelings of animals and non-living entities. In Auri's mindset, there is no difference between living and non-living entities and instead regards everything as capable of reacting emotionally to actions (other instances of this are Foxen, her lamplight, or the Brass Gear that she finds underwater). A second element that

appears in this paragraph is the intricate sensation of belonging and the suggested epistemology that is fundamentally based on the allegedly arbitrary order of the universe. In other words, Auri's focalization indicates that there is a hidden order of things that only she can see (if compared with other characters), that, if manipulated, distresses her to the extent of her willing to die for it (17). Between pages 132 and 134, Auri is walking with Fulcrum (the 9-dent gear) when she trips and lets it fall, breaking in three in the process. At first, Auri's reaction is of utter fear: "Auri somehow kept her feet. She didn't fall, but oh, her heart went icy in her chest. She sat down hard upon the steps. Too numb to walk. Her heart was cold and white as chalk" (132) and starts chastising herself for breaking it: "She knew. She should have moved more gently with the world. She knew the way of things. She knew if you weren't always stepping lightly as a bird the whole world came apart to crush you" (133). Auri feels there is a universal truth that she can grasp, which is that she must pass unnoticed, that she does not have to aspire to greatness, but rather focus on being silent. It is noticeable the use of the verb "crush" concerning the idea of trauma, conveying similarities to the notion of "cracked" (2008: 353) within the storyworld.

From here, the narrative voice is suggesting that the knowledge that Auri possesses regarding "the way of things" (2014a: 133) comes from experience rather than any other source: by connecting the identity discourse of Auri with the idea of being crushed, the narrative voice is suggesting the notion of trauma through that metaphor. As argued above, readers do not know what Auri's traumatic experience was (nor, it seems, it is needed for the narrative purposes of the novella), but they may know that her way of acting silently comes from a time in which she made something grandiose or, at least, noticeable. At the same time, however, the narration creates a difference between breaking and shattering, the former positive and the latter negative: "No. Not shattered. Broken. He had broken. Slowly Auri's face broke too. It broke into a grin so wide you'd think she ate the moon. Oh yes. Fulcrum had broken, but that wasn't wrong. Eggs break. Horses break. Waves break. Of course he broke. How else could someone so all certain-centered let his

perfect answers out into the world? Some things were just too true to stay” (133). Applying the notion of trauma as a breakpoint, then, the narration suggests that breaking is a form of change that happens, and that can be positive if the thing that breaks is “too true”.

The third and last element is Auri’s concern with little things. Throughout the narration, and as this paragraph exemplifies, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* focuses precisely on these things that are invisible to other characters. Auri’s fixation with small things may suggest an empathic link between her and them as if Auri felt herself like one of them. By fixating the whole narration around the small things instead of the great ones, the narration also presents a counterpart to the main trilogy’s: While the latter is concerned with world-shaping events and hard moral dilemmas, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* focuses on all the things that seem to be disregarded by Kvothe. With that, the narration questions the notion of epic narrative and questions the validity of it within a high dark fantasy setting in which not only nothing world-shaping happens, but also the focus of it seems to be innocuous and irrelevant for the main characters of its storyworld. Auri’s tribulations (or even Kvothe’s tribulations) regarding what present should be brought to the other is one of the main concerns of the novella, whereas in the main trilogy this is quickly dispatched: “I spent Ambrose’s money on an extraordinarily fine lute, two nice sets of used clothing for me, a small bottle of my own blood, and a warm new dress for Auri” (2008: 641). This suggests a bright contrast between both characters, and their mindset, but also between two narrative styles that either focus on the dilemmas of a character or the epic narration of a world-shaping hero.

All of this can be explored from a gender perspective: several of Auri’s attitudes seem to connect with normalized gender roles within the storyworld (as will be studied later). As such, it can be argued that her way of dealing with a traumatic experience respond similarly to the masculine’s dominion over the world over the Underthing (hence, Kvothe’s world-shaping mentioned above), leaving Auri with no other place to live but beneath (thus, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*). In short, it may be argued that the contrast between the two narrations

explores how gender politics affect trauma and identity. However, the fact that gender politics, which affect identity, is part of how Auri has configured her mindset, must take into consideration the fact that her mindset appears within the storyworld as an alternate one. As such, her classification as a feminine character should be done carefully: she appears as feminine (the use of the pronoun “she” throughout the story vouches for it), and she views herself as such, but it is essential to remember that Auri’s gender perception is alternate from the normalized ones within the setting –as assigning genders to items suggest, among other things, although, as Playford suggested when arguing about personalization, several items in English language are commonly given a gender, “such as ships always being female” (5)–, insofar as her self-perception, her identity discourse, and the perception that she has of the world regarding agency, as will be seen later, is altered. In short, while the rest of the world perceives her as feminine, and thus, given the normalized gender politics within the storyworld suggest, her oppression by the highly patriarchal setting (which this dissertation explores in further chapters) is more than plausible, her self-perception as a feminine character may or may not refer to the same conceptualization, or respond to the same gender identification. That is, it can be argued that the narration suggests that the notions of feminine and masculine are not the same for Auri than for the rest of the normalized world. That can be suggested, for instance, in the passage in which Kvothe cries in front of Auri, who just entered into his room, to which she states that “I’m here. You’re safe” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 77), after which the chapter ends abruptly, the following starting a few days later (78). Here, Auri’s role is subverted not as much because of such words (which may carry certain masculine connotations), but because of that abrupt ending: Kvothe’s silent between chapters suggests the unwillingness of accepting sympathy (as was stated earlier) and, at the same time, a moment in which Auri is protecting Kvothe, which he is not saying. Contrasting with the literary trope of the Angel of the House, “the notion that a woman’s virtue is measured by her dedication to domestic life, self-sacrifice, and servitude to her family” (LaGreca: 3), Auri is the one entering in Kvothe’s home as an non-passive figure. Moreover, she is actively dealing with Kvothe’s emotions.

While the subversion is brief and subtle, it opens ways to consider that Auri's consideration of gender politics may not be understood equally between Auri and her setting.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter, the notion of trauma has been defined as a term that relates primarily to the psychosocial environment in which an individual develops. Trauma has been considered as conveying three things at the same time: the first one is the traumatic experience by itself, a situation that is regarded, both by the experiencer and its surroundings, as a critical misfortune capable of metaphorically breaking the identity discourse of the experiencer (as defined in Herman, 1992: 33). This event or traumatic experience may be physical, such as having one's legs incapacitated, or psychological, such as experience enough distress to produce a psychological breakdown (33). The second element that defines trauma is the process of recuperation of such an event (as in Kirmayer et al.: 4). In the instances mentioned above, these could go from physically recovering from the traumatic experience to a complete recovery, such as Kvothe's recovery from his parents' death, through which he reacts psychosomatically (Rothfuss, 2008: 123), or Auri's (plausible) construction of an alternate self whose mindset clearly differs from the normalized mindset within the storyworld (2014a: 14). Finally, the third element that defines trauma is the experiencer's reaction towards it after it has happened, or, in other words, the discourse of trauma. Since trauma leaves a scar in the person that experiences it, either they may be unable to remember it or that the emotional response to remembering it varies from neutrality to rejection towards it (Abrams: 105). In the case of Kvothe, it is nearer to the former, whereas Auri seems to be nearer to the latter, as she rejects anything regarding her previous life. In Kvothe's words: "I hadn't learned much about her, as she was still shy and skittish. When I'd asked her name, she bolted back underground and didn't return for days" (Rothfuss, 2008: 353). These three elements affect the identity discourse of the experiencer by

producing a deep impression within it and, in fact, most times being a pivotal point around which their identity revolves, which, in fantasy fiction, sometimes responds to the motivation behind the whole narration (Blake: 20). For instance, in the case of Kvothe, the reason for his going to the University and, therefore, the rest of the adventure happening is his trying to come to terms with the killing of his parents and knowing more about their killers. In the case of Auri, its appearance in the storyworld responds to Kvothe's interactions with her and her cryptic way of transmitting him knowledge, and therefore requires the character to be traumatized, or, at least, acting strangely.

In this chapter it has also been argued, and as will be developed later, that the discourse of trauma requires an empathic link between reader and character that requires the reader to undergo a process of normalization that explains them what can be a traumatic situation and what cannot, especially when dealing with fantasy fiction (Whitehead: 84), in which the only epistemological knowledge that the reader is able to grasp about the storyworld comes from the narrative voice itself (or its account of the events that happen within the narration). As such, the reader must know what can be regarded as normal and what not to establish what can be a traumatic experience within the narration. In *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, for instance, the appearance of sympathy or its use against Kvothe (as happens in Rothfuss, 2011a: 188-189) is normalized by always stating how sympathy works and how it can be used against someone or as a defense against an attack. In *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, normalization takes the opposite approach and presents the reader with a completely exceptional mindset that, nonetheless, is presented as a normalized one. To Auri, the order in the universe that she sees is normal, as well as focusing on details that the normalized mindset presented in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. In Auri's mindset, even trauma is normalized as a process through which the truth can be attained, as the episode regarding Fulcrum's breaking suggests. In this sense, the novella suggests normalization by subversion, as it seems to be one of the primary devices of the whole storyworld regarding the engagement of the reader. By presenting a completely different mindset, the reader and the narration

engage in a debate in which the notion of normalization is brought to light. In terms of identity, the novella, therefore, argues for its individualization within society, maintaining the same ideas but using different strategies to bring it to light. The novella also serves as another step in its argumentation: while the main trilogy suggests the premises of identity from a more superficial level (that is, the connection between social identity and personal identity, and how both discourses intermingle) to then go through *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, where the idea of social identity is considered from the perspective of an outsider, or, rather, a disregarded person, one that is, at the same time, invisible to society and that actively rejects it.

In short, trauma can be regarded, in the novella, as a tool through which identity is explored, and a mechanism through which the narrative advances. In both the main trilogy and the novella, trauma is considered an element that defines the identity of the focalized characters or, rather, deconstructs normalized mindsets and presents alternate ones. Therefore, it is the mechanism that sets in motion the whole of the narrative. In the main trilogy, this is done following a common trope in fantasy fiction, the primary motivator of the story. In the novella, however, it is part of the character itself, part of the snapshot that the novella is producing. In this sense, identity (and traumatized identity) in the novella is essential, as the character's identity discourse motivates the genre.

Chapter 6: Narratology and Trauma

I've had person after person tell me that they empathize with Auri. That they know where she's coming from (Rothfuss, 2014a: 158)

1. Introduction

If trauma is, as stated in the previous chapter, difficult (at best) to be narrativized, at least through conventional methods, one needs to question the means through which said cultural aspect appears in a narrative. This chapter will focus on the narratological issues that surround conveying trauma as a discursive contraposition to the identitarian evolution that is culturally acknowledged as non-traumatic. In so doing, the chapter will argue that the narration of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* includes both intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrative elements that convey trauma, including not only elements such as format or discursive recursiveness, a narratological device commonly associated with trauma, but also chapter organization or syntactic organization. Thus, the chapter will be divided into six sections, the first one being this introduction. The second one delves into what was explored in chapter five, focusing on the discursive nature of trauma. Then, the chapter explores format, comparing the way trauma is treated in the main trilogy and the novella to then examine to what extent trauma, as part of what has been called here alternate mindsets, is present as something detrimental or not.

Furthermore, the consideration of alternate mindsets will be explored from a gender perspective. Afterward, the chapter provides some insights on the narratological approach that the novella uses to convey what cannot be specified, that is, through which elements the narration conveys trauma without stating it, which includes a section on reading. Finally, after exploring all of these, the chapter suggests some differences between *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and other novellas, in trying to establish contrasts in approach among them, to conclude with

a few remarks that sum up what appears here.

In short, what this chapter argues is that the format, a novella, is used here as an extradiegetic element to present trauma: like the novella, Auri cannot develop any plot, nor resolve any issue regarding her trauma, since both are fixated in a determined chronotope from which Auri is unable to go away. Especially when comparing it to trauma in *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man's Fear*, in which the character evolves and explores new scenarios, in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* Auri develops a spatial relationship with the Underthing in which she keeps revisiting the same spaces over and over, while her perception of them may change according to the character that accompanies her at that moment, or, alternatively, her mood.

It is interesting to note that when Auri shows signs of sadness –or, at least, weeps– both the narration and the exploration of the Underthing stop, up to the point in which, “On the third day, Auri [just] wept” (2014a: 77), without further description of where she is, or why she weeps. In this sense, the narrative voice seems to be empathetically linked with Auri, or, at least, tries to suggest such a feeling of depression with a lack of words. Alternatively, what happens here is that the narrator is either unable or unwilling to express why Auri is weeping and instead relies on the absence of words to convey that she is responding to the traumatic recursiveness that has been spoken of earlier.

2. Discursive Trauma

In the previous chapter, I have been talking about trauma as a phenomenon that precisely breaks with discursiveness. However, it can be plausible to state that there is a post-traumatic discursive method that readers (or receivers) can detect and identify the emitter as having suffered a traumatic experience that has been embedded within their identity discourse, which is the reason for readers to be able to notice the use of trauma as a narrative trope (Wald: 1). Wald explains that “As

tropes, hysteria, trauma, and melancholia negotiate cultural meanings that are interconnected with but exceed the nosology of the psychic ‘disorders’ established by psychiatry and psychoanalysis” (1). With this, Wald is not only affirming that there is a cultural, paramedical, notion of trauma, but also that this notion is regularly used in literature “as explanatory patterns to account for the experiences, biographies, and behaviours of individuals, but they are also, on a more abstract level, employed to explain collective and sociocultural phenomena” (1). That would mean that, in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, Auri’s traumatic behavior does not only serve to justify a silenced biography (since there is nothing stated in any of the storyworld that presents Auri before the University, and, in fact, it seems that, according to Kvothe, she had been traumatized within the University, as quoted before) produced, because of the patriarchal setting in which her narration takes place, but also to reinforce a normalized behavior within Temerant by contrast.

Similarly, and away from trauma, but not from discourse, the Adem, a group of people that lives in complete hermetism (and its people even communicate emotions with their hands, rather than their face), are regarded as eccentric. In fact, Tempi, the Adem warrior that accompanies Kvothe during his trip for the Maer is not considered normal: at a precise moment in which Tempi is about to fight another mercenary from Kvothe’s company, the narrator remarks on what he found odd in Tempi. He talks, and Kvothe notes that “he was behaving like a person, not just some mute, ambulatory doll” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 527) to finish saying that “Anything other than fidgety silence from the Adem was a blessing” (528). That plays a double role in terms of normalization and trauma. The first remark is associated with the individual. While it is true that the narration warns the reader about the unnaturalness (according to Kvothe) of Ademre communication, it is Tempi who acts like this. However, a few lines later, the narrator reminds the reader that it is their whole society that acts like that. This disruption of Kvothe’s ontological discourse, patent throughout the novel (summarizing what was stated earlier, that words have an intrinsic power), is not understood by the narrator easily and creates a question that will be later solved, which is what way they use to communicate if

they do not use words –implying, of course, a pretended objectivation of what Kvothe considers a human need–.

Fortunately, the narrator later reacts towards it and learns that they do communicate, but that their concept of communication is different, as well as its naturalness. Temp's case may make a point regarding normalization as a subversive tool that can be used precisely to raise awareness of the narrator's complete subjectivity on what is normal and what is not (since later, Kvothe learns that it is not fidgeting but, in fact, the way they have to communicate). However, it is not the same in the case of Auri, neither in the novels nor in the novella. In the case of Auri, the only one making sense of her behavior is a narrator that never explains to the reader the actions she is performing apart from the occasional "that was how it had to be" (2014a: 139), leaving the reader with a sense of confusion as to why things had to be that way. It could be understood, however, precisely as a way to make the reader aware of Auri's trauma by reconstructing her rhetoric code in a way that explicitly creates a disconnection between her and the reader.

The Adem section, of course, cannot be regarded as part of the trauma discourse. Nonetheless, its relevance as presenting an alternate mindset is vital: if readers view Auri as "cracked" (2008: 353), as well as the Adem, normalization is patent, that is, anything that is not the normalized, Kvothian discourse, is presented as falling into the same category, hence "cracked". That is the main reason why this section has used the term "alternate mindsets", for, even when focusing on trauma –one regarded as unfavorable within the storyworld, as the Crockery, "the University asylum" (Rothfuss, 2008: 307) suggests–, what the storyworld present is presenting is a raise of awareness on alternate, non-normalized mindsets.

Much like in the case of identity, it would be dangerous, however, to regard traumatic discourse as the exact same within the literary work and the cultural reality in which readers explore such a literary world. They may indeed be performed similarly, but they have a primary, clear difference:

However much it tries, the [*literary work*] can never access its own unconscious. It can only speak the repetitive effect of the trauma rather than the trauma itself. The only way the letter can arrive at its destination and lay the repetitive force of the trauma to rest, is if it engineers a situation of transference which seduces the listener to the story to articulate what the [*literary work*] *enacts*. (Van Boheemen-Saaf: 67, emphasis in the original)

As I have previously suggested, there needs to be a connection between the receivers of the traumatized identity and the person who emits it, a pact in which they both acknowledge the notion of trauma as particularly fundamental in their discourse. But in the case of fictional productions, the traumatized identity needs to be made explicit for the reader to acknowledge it. That is, there is no way a reader can grasp Auri's traumatized being without making explicit some issues that suggest readers a position where they are capable of understanding trauma because, as Van Boheemen-Saaf states, the unconscious dimension of a literary work cannot be accessed.

It is important to note that this may have the opposite effect as well, for devising techniques and generating complicity between the reader and the traumatized identity (both through the narrator and/or the character) may provoke a sense of interdiegetical normalization which would, in turn, make readers associate determined actions to traumatized fictional identities while others completely dissociated from this same trope –see as an example of this the development of the Cloudcuckoolander (TVTropes: n/p), or, in fact, any particular role that follows any taxonomical approach to characters as roles within a narrative–. That is one of the main reasons why discursive trauma is one of the topics that academics have paid a lot of attention over the last two decades. Here is a brief summary: in mimicking trauma, or, rather, presenting a traumatized identity, the reader must understand that traumatized identities are different and, in fact, unable to fit within a particular category (as suggested in Najita: 19). It can be conceivable, for instance, to consider Auri as a secondary, even tertiary character, especially in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, rather than a protagonist. However, it would be hard to

consider the traumatic identity of Auri, her identity discourse, as a secondary or tertiary literary trope, even in *The Name of the Wind* or *The Wise Man's Fear*, be it because of its world-building qualities, be it because it requires a whole novella to be, more or less, explained. In other words, the fact that the novella explores Auri's mindset suggests that the discourse is not of self-contained importance, but instead that its development pervades the whole storyworld. At least in *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* one, trauma is not treated as a secondary or tertiary narrative trope, but the motivator of a novella. And the overcoming of trauma is also at the core of Kvothe's identity discourse, for it is the primary motivator for him to travel around the world searching the Chandrian. That goes hand in hand with what Gibbs noted when he stated that understanding this increasing tendency of setting narratives in alternate worlds in the twenty-first century as a way of retreating from reality seems to be "attractive as a rationale for these writers adopting the counterfactual form [but] clearly simplistic" (234). Instead, he suggests, "The motivation of these authors is directed towards analysing trauma rather than retreating from it" (234), implying that understanding the novella as an exploration of trauma, a story that includes trauma in a character to which the reader may relate (especially if they have read the published books of the main trilogy) is not only valid but also goes accordingly to the chronotopic tendency of the genre. Its exploration can make the reader understand the gender politics that apply within the storyworld. Thus, Auri's mindset exploration not only suggests an exploration inwards Auri, but also outwards, exploring the gender politics, and therefore, working towards world-building²⁷.

The importance of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* as a traumatic account is that the novella never explicitly states that Auri is traumatized as a demeaning factor for her. Instead, the narrator procures the needed methods to normalize Auri's

²⁷ This process of world-building, however, can only be done once the narrative is situated within the same storyworld as the rest of the corpus studied here. Thus, it is the reader the one who has to establish such connections between the gender politics present in the novella and the world-building present in the novels.

mindset and not consider her as cracked (which suggests a hierarchical approach to traumatic experiences). That may respond to what Gurevitz says when he states that “When trauma cannot be processed, or ‘written’, it cannot be overcome. It becomes a wild fantasy that generates reality in the present” (21). By presenting the character in a novella instead of a novel in which Auri is unable to go on and overcome her traumatized identitarian discourse, the narrative voice becomes an accomplice of such a discourse. The novella, then, implies an acknowledgment of traumatized identitarian discourses as something not only valid to understand as such but as something that does not need to be overcome. While in other sagas (or even in the main trilogy of this one) the narrative voice –or even the characters– suggests that overcoming trauma is character development and evolution, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* presents trauma as the discursive necessity, a necessity implied in the explored character. That is, the novella focuses on Auri not only because of this alternate mindset but also because this mindset alterity appears in this particular character. Paraphrasing –and adapting– Gurevitz, the ontological break with the normalized mindset of this storyworld is presented as an static experience that is more than enough to justify the narrative, even to overcome the notions of good and evil to be reshaped at will (21) and the fact that the narrative voice adopts the traumatized discourse does not only serve as the means by which the reader can empathize with Auri but also as a way to rebel against the idea of trauma as a negative aspect (21). It is in the narrative’s eliminating the traumatic experience and the actual trauma that the traumatized identity is empowered as an identitarian discourse at level with non-traumatized identities, capable thus of surviving even in the worst circumstances. In short, what this narration suggests is that, although it may be seen that Auri’s trauma is what forced her underground, it may not be so, and her alternate mindset is presented here as one of the tools she used to survive in that hostile environment.

3. Structure

While in the previous section, I already suggest the connection between the novella and the narratology, this is not the only aspect of structure that relates and reinforces the idea of a link between trauma and the form it takes in the narrative. In this section, the use of titles and chapter divisions will be explored first, and then there will be an analysis of the presence of a preface and epilogue by the author that serve as apologies for what he considers strange and weird (Rothfuss, 2014a: “Author’s Foreword”).

The novella has nine different chapters: “The Far Below Bottom of Things” (1), “What a Look Entails” (37), “Beautiful and Broken” (59), “A Quite Uncommon Pleasant Place” (67), “Hollow” (77), “The Angry Dark” (79), “Ash and Ember” (101), “All to her Desire” (119), “The Graceful Way to Move” (123), “The Hidden Heart of Things” (135), and, finally, “Coda” (149). Contrary to the main trilogy chapters, which are numbered, save the prologues and the epilogues, the novella’s are not. The decision of the narrative voice to leave the chapters unnumbered, in bright contrast with Kvothe’s narrative, does not only reflect on the snapshot-like nature of the novella but also suggest alternate mindsets by presenting an alternative time perception: it is not only that time is irrelevant in a novella, since there is no character development nor overarching plot, but also that Auri’s understanding of time is not as important as it is for other Western identitarian discourses, leaving it (in eight of the eleven chapters, without taking into account the “Author’s Foreword” nor the “Author’s Endnote”) to the beginning of the narrative body (1, 37, 59, 67, 77, 79, 101, and 123). That traumatic identities perceive time differently, even to the point of mixing past and present, has been profoundly studied by critics such as Richards, who states, supporting her argument in Hesford, that “Time can spontaneously collapse into an unmediated past-as-present, through trauma’s capacity to break through, unbidden and unannounced, into conscious reality. Trauma manifests itself as a distortion of cognitive and sensory apprehension that is always ‘out of reach, unknowable, shifting yet always present’” (Hesford: 110 qtd. in Richards: 39), and further reinforced, by contrast, by Hogan, who states that

“We encode experience into hierarchized units, organizing temporality first of all by reference to emotional response. Our emotion systems respond to perceptual fragments (innate or acquired during a critical period; directly sensed or imagined) and to emotional memories” (66). If we contrast Richard’s explanation of time perception in traumatic identities and Hogan’s holistic (but giving prominence to non-traumatic identities) approach to this, the fact that the narrative de-hierarchizes ordinal numbers and temporally organizes more than two-thirds of the chapters right after their title –“the productive extension of the [literary work] ... just as traumatic repetition is the extension of the moment of violence” (Van Boheemen-Saaf: 70)–, this seemingly unimportant issue becomes one of the many details that work towards a definition of Auri’s identity as traumatic, without it meaning that the reader has to acknowledge her as a lesser character. What is more, the fact that Auri appears as the main character (partly in exploring the notion of trauma), suggests precisely this same issue: Auri’s identity discourse is not inferior to those that are more normalized in the storyworld.

Many chapter titles refer to a double relationship between Auri’s body and the space in which the narrative is situated, such as “The Far Below Bottom of Things” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 1), “A Quite Uncommon Pleasant Place” (67), “Hollow” (77), “The Angry Dark” (79), “Ash and Ember” (101), or “The Hidden Heart of Things” (135), and the rest are products of either an affective response to an action or the action itself, like “What a Look Entails” (37), “Beautiful and Broken” (59), “All to her Desire” (119), or “The Graceful Way to Move” (123). One of the most relevant chapter names is “Coda” (149), which, as mentioned earlier, in musical terms refers to the section that finishes the piece after as many repetitions as it has, either starting back from the beginning –Da Capo– or from a determined point –Dal Segno– (Rodríguez Alvira: n/p). The connection between identity and music is made explicit in the narrative, enhancing the musical relationship between the term and the chapter name, and diminishing any plausible polysemy. This last chapter consists of one single sentence: “Deep in the Underthing, stones warm beneath her feet, Auri heard a faint, sweet strain of music” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 149). This strain

of music, along with several clues within the narrative, suggests that Auri's visitor (probably Kvothe) has finally arrived. The fact that its arrival marks the ending of a repetitive piece of music, as well as the conclusion of the novella, the character snapshot as suggested early, enhances the idea of Auri revolving around the same traumatized identitarian discourse. Furthermore, this coda serves as well as a metaphor for Auri's identity discourse, where readers perceive that the novella, up to the "Coda", is repeated, thus indicating the psychological fixation with trauma, or, instead, with her alternate mindset.

Written in the same style as the body of the narrative, the chapters' names are integrated as part of the narrative, instead of providing an explanatory note for the reader as if the narrator was extradiegetic. That is, the chapter titles suggest, much like in the case of *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* main trilogy, that it is the main character who has named them. However, in the case of the main trilogy, the narrator, Kvothe, explicitly acknowledges that he is telling his story, which is being written down by Chronicler, whereas in the case of Auri, there is no explicit clarification as to who is narrating and whether the narrative voice acknowledges its nature as such within the main narration. Yet the explicit appearance of the name of the author, "Pat Rothfuss" (159), as a necessary part of the book that warns the reader about the unnaturalness of the story –"It doesn't do a lot of the things a classic story is supposed to do" ("Author's Foreword")– strikes as odd, even to himself –"I know, that's not the sort of thing an author is supposed to say. The marketing people aren't going to like this. My editor is going to have a fit" ("Author's Foreword")–, suggesting yet another layer of confusion to the novella that, without an explicit note of him being the narrator, could have been easily analyzed as having an omniscient, intradiegetic narrator capable of penetrating the identitarian discourse of Auri and adopt her way of perceiving the world. What happens then is that the narrator is both integrated within the narrative and presented as an external agent capable of shaping Temerant at will. While the inclusion of an author's foreword and endnote is not new, it is uncommon in fiction books. David Herman suggests that "Story openings prompt interpreters to take up residence ...

in the world being evoked by a given narrative” (2009a: 79). However, since, in this case, the opening is done (allegedly) extradiegetically, the opening does not meet such expectations. Instead, the reader is suggested to possibly not wanting even to buy the book in which the narration appears. In Herman’s words, the analysis of such opening, comparing and contrasting it with other openings, may underscore “how part of the meaning of ‘genre’ consists of distinctive protocols for worldmaking” (79), that, in this case, are subverted. By using them, either the narrator/Rothfuss becomes part of the intradiegetic world; the production is suggested as non-fiction –as was typical for many historical novels, such as *Flashman* (Fraser)–; the storyworld is somehow connected with the reader’s world (allegedly through Rothfuss), and appear as fluid; the Rothfuss/narrator digression is, in fact, a hallucination of either Auri or the actual narrator; or none of the above apply. In whichever case, the fact that the narration provides these two uncommon elements to justify the narration suggests, at the very least, strangeness in the narration, which reinforces the non-normalization of Auri’s mindset without it meaning that it is less than other mindsets from Temerant.

Furthermore, the use of these two unusual elements within the narrative poses yet another question regarding the setting in which the narration takes place. The boundaries between San Francisco in 2013 and Temerant are weakened by them, and the appearance of a primary and a secondary setting suggest a merging of both of them into one, similarly to, for instance, J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth: as *The Hobbit* states, “this is a story of long ago. At a time the languages and letters were quite different from ours *today*” (2001: 15, my emphasis), which could suggest that the “today” (15) that appears is, in fact, the publication date of the book, thus connecting both settings. Moreover, as Loos argues, the connection between both worlds is made “fully explicit only in The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, but there were two very strong indications in the published Lord of the Rings, though both were outside the narrative” (n/p), implying this same use of a foreword and, in this case,

an Appendix (n/p)²⁸. Much like in the case of Tolkien, but expanding on San Francisco in 2013, the use in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* of a setting from the readers' referential world and one that, as mentioned before, adheres to what has been defined as a high dark fantasy setting, potentially enhances the non-referentiality of Temerant. The question that arises, then, is the function of such odd elements within a narrative that speaks about a bizarre character in an unusual way. If the reader is to believe Rothfuss' voice, the foreword is essentially a warning against what the reader will find inside, and the Endnote "a story about a story" (2014a: 151). However, they also have a narrative function that first immerse the reader into a different mindset than theirs. Then, right after the Coda, the narration breaks the suspension of disbelief (Coleridge: n/p). "Breaks", in fact, is a keyword in this case. With that, the reader remembers that the narration is, at best, belonging to a fictional storyworld. At the same time, this merging both worlds utilizing the same narrator for both stories reinforces a sense of confusion/rapidly swapping between worlds that serves as a clue to a better understanding of Auri's mindset: by producing at the same time a narrator/Rothfuss that directly states that the reader is facing "a strange story" (Rothfuss, 2014a: "Author's Foreword") and, on the next page, changing tone and form to suggest a change of narrator, as well as of setting, the novella forces the reader to get accustomed to changes as quickly as possible to grasp any meaning from the novella, and, when the narration is over, the reader has precisely three lines to adapt, again, to a new story set in San Francisco in 2013 (151). For the reader, as it is for Auri, it is either confusion or adaptation. Hegdall Nilssen implies the inclusion of this narrator as an embodied agent capable of doing what I have suggested by stating that:

As soon as you build a picture of a narrator whose voice you can gather to be some sort of person, I would claim that this is a character narrator, whether it is a character inside or outside the story world, and that this narrator always has an

²⁸ Tolkien's non-fictional appearances (for instance the one at the BBC in 1971), although not as reliable as an analysis of his books, also suggested that the Middle Earth was not an alternate world, but this world "at a different state of imagination" (Sauron's Ring: 5:40).

omniscient heterodiegetic narrator above, functioning as a “chief” narrating instance ... The key to viewing this proposal as not being reductive is to see how the intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator and extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator function together. (43-44)

As such, the double narrator that is present in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* can be, at the same time, the “authorial” voice and the intradiegetic narrator of the body of the cultural product²⁹. Alternatively, there is no need to intradiegetically connect both narrators, and instead, readers should consider that there is a third narrator above both of them that, in this case, tells “a story about a story” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 151) and the story about a story’s story.

All of the above serve to suggest that structure and content, in the case of the novella, are not only merged as in the case of the main trilogy. Structure in the case of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* does not follow the same approach towards plot than *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, nor accompanies it. In the case of the novella, its form works as a psychological, almost hidden tool for the reader that enhances Auri’s identitarian discourse across the storyworld. In other words, Auri’s identity would not be understandable (or, at least, as coherent as possible) without the format of the story reinforcing it. And that identitarian discourse pervades the whole storyworld and pushes over the boundaries of the novella to interfere in any narrative in which Auri is present, even to the point of questioning Kvothe in his depictions of Auri. The form of the novella, then, readjusts the text of readers of the whole storyworld and conveys a strengthening of a subversion of a normalizing hierarchy (the more frequent the identitarian discourse, the more legitimate it is within a society), instead suggesting that traumatized discourses are as valid and legitimate as non-traumatized ones, as indicated above. Thus, the contrast between the novella and the novels is made patent: where the first is introspective and psychologically deep, the latter are focused on action, world-shaping actions that,

²⁹ As mentioned before, for the sake of clarity, author here will only be used here as one of the metaphorical cognitive functions, the one that creates the text.

in short, present a different way of configuring identity than the one shown in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*.

4. Narratological Approach to the Novella

This narratological approach will focus on the way the narration is conveyed, specifically regarding two different focuses: space, and Auri's body. These are two of the most prominent examples within the narrative in which Auri's traumatic identity is expressed discursively.

In suggesting that there is a connection between the body and the space of the novella, a female body, it could be argued that the five procedures of world-building that Herman notes from Goodman could apply to literary bodybuilding. These five elements are "composition and decomposition [the act of combining and decombining smaller parts of the world/body in order to create different connections between them]; weighing [changing the importance of determined elements between both referential worlds]; ordering [establishing new taxonomies]; deletion and supplementation [creating differences –be it by addition or by elimination– between worlds/bodies]; and deformation [reshaping elements from one world to another]" (Herman, 2009b: 77). These are easily noticeable when comparing the referential world and the novella's world, or even the novella's world and the main trilogy's world. It is also prominent in the way in which the narrator embodies Auri's identity discourse. The most visible one is, perhaps, weighing. The whole novella is based on the idea of Auri giving importance to the small things that surround her, such as the "fine white tea cup" (Rothfuss, 2014a: 3) that calmly waits for the "broken plate of porcelain" (3) to be together one to each other.

While that personification could be just a supplementation, Auri's fixation with the smallest things, such as this one or the fact that everything that she possesses is still where they should be, which "was good" (2), is the trait that is most explored within the novella. In contrast, Auri's self-perception of her body is

diminished, comparing herself, at best, to an astral body. When looking at herself in the mirror, “Auri grinned at herself in the mirror. She looked like the sun” (5). That is one of the few instances in which Auri is presented as a whole, and doubtlessly the only one in which Auri feels positive about her body, according to the narrator. In contrast, ten pages later, the narrator states that Auri, once out of the water,

felt small. *Not the smallness that she strove for every day.* Not the smallness of a tree among trees ... And not just small of body either. She knew there was not much of her. When she thought to look more closely at her standing mirror, the girl she saw was tiny as an urchin begging on the street. The girl she saw was thin as thin. Her cheekbones high and delicate. Her collarbones pressed tight against her skin. But no. With her hair pulled back and wetted down besides. She felt . . . less. She felt tamped down. Dim. More faint. Feint. Feigned. Fain. It would have been pure unpleasant without the perfect strip of linen. (11, my emphasis)

Auri, in short, disparages herself while giving importance to usually disregarded elements from the storyworld. The narrator explicitly tells the reader so, since she strives to be small, to be unnoticed. In contrast, many of the things of which she is aware are regarded as central to Auri.

This, along with Punday’s argument that literary bodies are not defined only “by thematic or cultural influences, but also the specifically narrative terms in which the writer is representing the body” (57), may be a reason for the scarcity of Auri’s physical depictions, and instead pervading the novella with the world that surrounds her: since the narrative voice focuses on Auri, and Auri does not think too much about herself, the narrator rarely depicts her. The lack of Auri’s descriptions as a whole is not casual but causal and should be concluded that “narratives dramatize the corporeality implicit within all interaction between text and reader in the bodies of characters. Character corporeality in this sense will always function as a way of commenting on how the [literary work] may be read” (82), that is, they adapt the text insofar as the lack of explicit corporeality, and the abundance of an implicit one, suggests a debate with the reader in which the best

way to understand her relationship with her body is, for her, secondary, or implicit at best.

Auri appears as an isolated character within an enclosed fictional fantasy setting that is highly patriarchal, as the following passage confirms:

“Should I cloister myself then?” Fela asked ... “You know how you feel when Mola takes the time to flirt with you?” ... “Oh, you’re fascinating. But a girl wants more than that. She wants a man devoted to her.” ... “I refuse to throw myself at her like every other man she’s ever met” ... “Have you ever thought she might feel the same way?” ... “Suddenly it’s offensive to her if I take another woman out to see a play?” ... “She didn’t say twenty words to me over dinner, ... And she’s disappointed I didn’t grope her afterward?”. (2011a: 975-976)

As such, and albeit its problematic translation to the readers’ referential world, the scarcity of descriptions should be interpreted as a reflection of the patriarchal setting in which she lives, rather than an apology to it. In fact, it may be seen as another critic regarding the objectivization of female characters through contrast: while Kvothe raises awareness by explicitly assessing every woman he encounters, Auri is the other side of the coin, attempting to become invisible, so she is not objectivized –and, even then, Kvothe does so in *The Name of the Wind* (2008: 353)–

Furthermore, Punday argues that it may be obvious to state that bodies require to be systematically separated from not-bodies (55). However, as it is the case in this narrative, bodies are not “different from objects like tables and chairs because it acts on and responds to the environment” (59), as the narrator implies their agency on several occasions. Moreover, the narrative subverts this very idea by exposing Auri’s vision. The reader realizes that “this invisible system is at work within all narratives” (58). If, as he states, this separation is the principal motivator of several narrative decisions, the question that one should ask about *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* would be the function of this non-separation between bodies (i.e., animated agents) and things (i.e., inanimated ones). Everything in the

novella seems to have a degree of agency in a wide range of degrees, none of which is zero. As such, Punday's inference from studying Harvey's work is that "we think about literary characters in terms of their contrasts to each other" (54), the first one of which being their agency (54), which would mean that the novella completely subverts the polar distribution that Punday implies and instead suggests a graded scale of agency, in which Auri is not at the top.

The Slow Regard of Silent Things narrative voice talks as differently as Auri's mindset is to others'. As such, the voice's style consists of convoluted sentences that can be conveyed as difficult. In the words of Stromberg, "Narrative strategies that pose a challenge to readers ... problematize verisimilitude by instigating questions about narration. They induce hesitation between the believability of the illusion and the consciousness of the story as invention" (64). That adds a layer of this narrative exercise of being on the verge of reliability and unreliability. Again, like in the main trilogy, the main issue regarding reliability is that readers have no other source of information to which they can relate. There is no other account either of the Underthing as explored by Auri nor of Auri's mindset. Therefore, readers must again tread carefully, in terms of world-building, if they are to grasp any epistemological knowledge of Temerant. The only thing that may serve as a counterpoint for Auri's perception of the Underthing, however, appears, not as detailed, in *The Wise Man's Fear*. In searching for a way into the Archives, Kvothe follows Auri into "the Underthing. We went quietly along the Nodway, jumped our way through vaults, then entered Billows, a maze of tunnels filled with a slow, steady wind" (Rothfuss, 2011a: 35). For the sake of comparison, here is an example extracted from *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*:

Auri hurried through Port, heading out by way of the slanting doorway this time, rather than the crack in the wall. She twisted up through Withy, Foxen throwing wild shadows on the walls. As she ran, her hair streamed out behind her like a banner. She took the spiraling stairs through Darkhouse, down and around, down and around. When she finally heard moving water and the tink of glass she knew she'd crossed the threshold into Clinks. (2014a: 7-8)

The difference between both narratives seems visible enough, revealing two different mindsets: while Kvothe's account of the Underthing appears in a matter-of-factly tone, Auri's perception focuses on the different steps that she takes during her trip in a more detailed form, which slows the narration, and therefore, suggests readers to engage more with each particular scene, rather than rapidly going from one place to another. Moreover, that abundance of details makes the communication of the main action (traveling from one place to another) harder and suggests a communication as fragmentary as her perception of her own body: where the narrative voice of *The Wise Man's Fear* is concerned with providing epistemological knowledge about what Kvothe did during his being in the Underthing, the narrative voice of the novella is not concerned with that, however, and instead focuses on exploring techniques through which the reader may create an empathic link with Auri.

The point of the narration, then, is not to cognitively know about the character as much as it is to connect with her empathically. Vickroy states that "Effective trauma [narratives] engage readers in a critical process by immersing them in, and yet providing perspective on, the ... thinking, feeling, and behavior of the traumatized individual" (138). If the reader understands the novella as a snapshot of a traumatized character, and that language is not unable by itself to convey the sensation of trauma, then the empathic link that the narrative voice is creating by hindering cognitive language and enhancing empathic links serves as the connective tissue that the reader needs to convey the notion of trauma against the normalized storyworld present in the main trilogy.

Even so, the story does present world-building, can be read as such, and is brandished as a Companion story for *The Kingkiller Chronicle*—thus implying some world-building complementation. Whether or not the reader can believe the narrator's account on Auri's view of the Underworld is not that relevant. That is, the world-building that the novella presents is not as locative as it is in the main trilogy, or, alternatively, it is as locative as Auri's feelings towards it allows the narrative: Instead of offering a neutral, normalized vision of a group of tunnels and

forgotten halls (if that exists at all), Auri's focus on details makes her account semiotically different to that of Kvothe, explicitly transforming a place (what lies under the University) into an affective chronotope (the Underthing) which she inhabits. As Hogan states, "spatiality, the 'existential' experience of location, is fundamentally an emotional experience". (Hogan: 29). The narrative voice makes this explicit using "the semiotic cues available in [the] given narrative medium to design blueprints for creating and updating [the] storyworld ... [including] the expressive resources of (written) language ... not just words ... but also typographical formats, the disposition of space on the printed page ... and ... diagrams, sketches, and illustrations". (Herman, 2009a: 75), all of which appear in the novella. Interestingly, following Herman's list, this is the only book within the storyworld that has been published as an illustrated book since the beginning³⁰. In trying to convey as much as possible the affective value of the novella, the narrative voice needs to rely on a different language of that of word-based language (the one normalized in the main trilogy), thus differentiating the way of communicating ideas from other products of the same storyworld, such as visual cues. The storyworld makes a case for this. As has been explored in previous chapters, music is one of the most prominent arts within this storyworld. When Arliden states that "A poet is a musician who can't sing" (Rothfuss, 2008: 102) to continue adducing that words are less direct than music in terms of affection –"Music touches their hearts directly no matter how small or stubborn the mind of the man who listens" (102)– the narrative is indeed suggesting that there are other arts that are better to express emotions, which is a condition *sine qua non* for empathic links. Furthermore, Kvothe's traumatic experience with the Chandrian first appears in terms of visual impact:

I *saw* Trip's tent lying half collapsed and smoldering ... I *saw* Teren's body lying by his wagon, his sword broken in his hand ... I *stared* as if it were a diagram in a book I was trying to understand ... Some small rational part of me realized I was in

³⁰ As of 2017, a tenth anniversary illustrated edition of *The Name of the Wind* has been published, but the first edition of the book was not illustrated.

deep *shock*. ... I did not want to think about what I *saw* ... I *focused* on the kettle ...
looked about aimlessly. (114, my emphases)

The connection between visual impact and trauma, and between other arts and affective expression, implies the relationship between the illustrations of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and the visual aspect of both Trauma and, therefore, Traumatized identity. Furthermore, visual images enhance the development of collective thinking. It is one thing that the readers imagine Auri, but thanks to the visual elements that the novella gives them, their thinking is directed towards a particular interpretation of the novella, much like in the case of words, but, in this case, providing an additional layer of interpretation-guiding for them.

Most of the illustrations within the novella present Auri and her surroundings in black and white, the first one appearing right after the “Author’s Foreword”. In it, Auri is looking through a grille upwards, where the light of the illustration seems to come from (2014a: “Author’s Foreword”). Most of the pictures in which Auri appears seem to focus on the contrast between light and darkness, where Auri always appears as white, as the light source, or as part of the space which she inhabits. As such, the connection mentioned above between her body and the Underthing is reinforced through these illustrations. The rest of them focus on the small, common elements, such as a broom (33) Foxen (16), Fulcrum (19), a crystal (27), a corner (26), a pipe (50-51), a jar (63), a tree (75), a lamp (82), a shelf with a book of secrets stored (88), a stone arc (90-91) and many others. Some of these illustrations cover the page number (such as the pipe). Following the same idea mentioned above regarding chapter numeration, it can be argued that illustrations, as much as chapters, suggest Auri’s alternate mindset, where a diachronic understanding of her surroundings is not as crucial as the synchronic relationship that she has with them. In other words, the illustrations would reinforce the idea of Auri’s novella being a snapshot, not developing over time, but expanding and stopping, providing a photograph for the reader.

5. Conclusions

If *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* is understood as a trauma-exploration novella (in addition to its function as providing a snapshot of a character), then it must be understood as a subversive one for trauma studies. Firstly because the novella debates with the reader the notion of fantasy, producing, at best, a fantasy within a fantasy setting of which readers have no other data but the one that the many narrative voices of the storyworld offer, but the many intradiegetic and extradiegetic aspects that the production offers them suggest an exploration of the traumatized identity discourse in which the traumatized character does not appear as a secondary or tertiary character. Instead, the narrative voice cues the reader towards the creation of an empathic link between Auri and the reader. In short, if the reader understands the novella as exploring trauma, and therefore alternate mindsets, as suggested before, then it could be considered the manifestation of an identitarian discourse that overcomes its internal dimension, and thus it appears not only internally, but also externally.

All of this raises awareness regarding the normalization of other discourses: it is not that Kvothe's identity discourse does not have an external manifestation, but that such an expression is normalized within both the reader's referential world and Kvothe's storyworld. On the other hand, Auri's discourse is not normalized, and thus both its external and internal manifestations are strange enough for the authorial voice to warn the reader before buying it. By raising awareness of that normalization in this way, the novella also breaks with the idea of shattered as fragmentary: none of these manifestations are suggested in the book as disconnected, but instead producing a cohesive and coherent identitarian discourse that, at best, presents a different perception of the same storyworld. While it is true that the metaphor of shattered still works for the narration, the novella makes a point of being shattered not as a detrimental trait for a character, but as a circumstance that drastically changes a mindset.

Under this scope, one could ask whether the narration may have had any

other presentation or not, whether one might understand the novella as accurate in defining trauma. In Najita's account of trauma and history in contemporary fiction, she points out that the aesthetic presentation of a narration may be "less about a reality inherently 'marvelous' and more about presenting the truth behind discursive constructions of 'reality' (21). As such, readers should question whether the trauma that this storyworld exposes, the non-normalized mindset of Auri, as well as its approximation by the narrative voice, does not only draw from such a storyworld to be presented but also on perceptions of trauma from the reader's referential world. Key to this would be the inclusion of the Foreword and the Endnote, which would suggest a connection between worlds as explored earlier. If so, then, as Najita points out, the capacity of a narrative voice to produce a discourse creatively "is as fictive as fiction itself. When ... official discourse produces a reality so brutal ... that it exceeds the bounds of what ... [is] not only representable but real, how does the work of art reflect it?" (21). Indeed, one should ask such questions. In trying to provide an answer for *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, I suggest that the narrative may be both subversive and accurate. It is accurate insofar as it depicts the non-normalized identity discourse through linguistic means that suggest this alterity; and it is subversive, but not against the idea of trauma, but rather against the referential world's normalization of a discourse in which trauma has been taken away from any linguistic discourse, suggesting a way to enhance the empathic link between the reader and a traumatized character through means of linguistic alterity. Vickroy's words should be borne in mind when she states that trauma fiction conveys "*prototypically* imagined situations and symptoms" (138, my emphasis), however, and researchers should understand that what the narrative voice from the novella suggests is a language that opens the way towards an approximation to non-normalized identity discourses.

That alterity of language also makes a point in understanding gender identity in a highly patriarchal setting, as explored above. It is not casual that Auri appears as childish and feminine: following the same pattern as above, one should ask whether the inclusion of a feminine, childish, female character as a traumatized and

isolated main protagonist is suggesting, again, subversion and accuracy in terms of societal repression –as Najita notes when pointing out the “official discourse” in the above quotation– of all these traits. The novella, as the novels did, does not provide any clear answer but one or two sentences that may be related to this connection between the referential world and the cultural product: in the endnote, Rothfuss states that he wonders “how many of us walk through our lives, day after day, feeling slightly broken and alone, surrounded all the time by others who feel exactly the same way ... This story is for all the slightly broken people out there” (Rothfuss, 2014a: 159), thus enhancing the empathic link between reader and characters and, at the same time, narrowing the distance between the storyworld and the reader’s referential world.

**SECTION III: “NOT AN EASY THING TO NOTICE”. ALTERNATE
EMBODIMENTS IN TEMERANT**

SUMMARY OF SECTION III

The Waystone was his, just as the third silence was his. This was appropriate, as it was the greatest silence of the three, wrapping the others inside itself. It was a deep and wide as autumn's ending. It was heavy as a great river-smooth stone. It was the patient, cut-flower sound of a man who is waiting to die (Rothfuss, 2008: 1).

This third and final analytical section will cover the notion of alternate embodiments within the storyworld in the two short stories that have been published until now, “The Lightning Tree” (2015a) and “How Old Holly Came to Be” (2013a). As such, it will first briefly state what will be considered here as a short story and how the two mentioned above belong to the genre of high dark fantasy. Afterward, the study will focus on what will be discussed as an alternate embodiment and how the embodiment of the two main characters of the short stories affects how they configure their identity discourse. Finally, in the last chapter of this section, the focus will be on the narratological devices that the narrative voices of these stories use to convey their alternate embodiment, and therefore part of their identitarian discourse.

Chapter 7: Fantasy in the Short Stories

Most of the Fae don't come to this world. They don't like it. It rubs all rough against them ... But when they do come, they like some places better than others. They like wild places. Secret places. Strange places. There are many types of fae ... And all of them are ruled according to their own desires (Rothfuss, 2015a: 817)

In the beginning, there was the wood. It was strong, and old. And it grew beside a stream, by a tower all of stone (Rothfuss, 2013a: n/p)

1. Introduction

This chapter will analyze the concept of short story and its convergence with fantasy as a genre, in a similar manner to what has been previously done with the novella, to study the two short stories that complete the corpus regarding Rothfuss' *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld. These two short stories present two different ways in which the short story has developed as a medium: while the narrative and fact presentation of the first one, "The Lightning Tree" (2015a), seems to adhere to the poetics of short fiction that materialized in mainstream modernist short fiction, the second one, "How Old Holly Came to Be" (2013a) seems to evoke to the traditions that nurtured said short fiction, as will be suggested later in this chapter. Furthermore, their relevance within the storyworld in terms of fantasy is acquired through their presenting, in the former, Bast's capacity for magic, and, in the latter, a theological cosmology that deals with the non-human beings that exist in Temerant and who present an alternate embodiment, a term which will be explored later. As such, this chapter, along with the whole section, will focus on both short stories as different narratives, and with different analytical purposes, although using the same medium to their development.

This chapter is divided into five subsections, including this one. In the second one, the chapter will delve into the ontology of the short story and how these two stories adhere or separate from the definition for the sake of analytical purposes. The third subsection will talk about the concept of fantasy world-building that is key in fantasy novels and novellas (as mentioned in chapters 1 and 4), and how it develops in the short story. Subsection four will deal with the concept of the supernatural and the intersection between *pragmatikós* and *allós* in short fiction, and how these two short stories, being examples of two different short fiction traditions, deal with these two concepts regarding character focalization. That is, this subsection will try to answer how a cosmology can deal with terms such as *pragmatikós* and *allós*. Finally, the chapter will offer some conclusions.

2. Short Stories

Short story, and by association short fiction, are terms that do not have a clear definition up to today. In a similar way to what happens with the novella, these terms have been discussed over the last century without adequately establishing a clear definition for them. That may have to do with the massive success of the novel, not only in academic spheres but also in popular culture. This is not to say, of course, that there are not short fiction readers, nor that there are short fiction collections in the Western literary canon. Yet novels seem to be the sort of book that most people prefer. In *thegreatestbooks.org*, a webpage that algorithmically creates a “master list based on how many lists a particular book appears on” (Sherman: n/p), the first appearance of a short story collection (stripping away the frame story, that is) is number 30 with *One thousand and one nights* (Al-Shaykh), followed right after by Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. On the 33rd is *The Stories of Anton Chekhov* (Chekhov) and, in place 49, a collection of Poe’s poetry and tales. In the whole list, there are seven short story collections, two poem collections, five plays, and one (allegedly) novella. The rest of the literary works present are novels. Likewise, *Bookdepository.com*’s “Best Books of All Time” list features a large number of

novels that vastly exceed the conjoined amounts of other fictional (and non-fictional) works (“Best Books of All Time”: n/p). However, I am not suggesting a complete disregard of short fiction. There are several works on, for instance, modernist short fiction, as well as others, such as, for example, Head’s *The Modernist Short Story*, Malcolm and Malcolm’s *A Companion to the British and Irish Short Story*, or Hunter’s *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*, among others. Yet, most of the research corpus is primarily based on the novel. It can be said that the modern conceptualization of short fiction has less history and less material to analyze in comparison to the novel as a whole and that critics have ascertained a clear point of difference in conceptualization between the folktale and the short story –mainly associated with the Modernist short story and its characteristics (as hinted in Head), but the fact remains that short fiction seems to have appeared less in academic analysis than the novel.

In recent times, however, the short story has acquired some relevance, and some collections of essays have appeared that study the influence and the ontology of the short story, especially regarding the (allegedly) epitome of modern short fiction, the modernist period, in which short fiction appeared very frequently, and in which it did not appear as socially stigmatized as it seems in some spheres to the audience nowadays, as suggested in Bunting, “Three Ways Short Stories Are Different Than Novels” (n/p) or in Sims, “Should You Write a Novel or Short Story?” (n/p), both arguing that, essentially, a short story is a simpler, shorter version of a novel, although praising its simplicity.

One thing on which many critics agree is that it is not that much about word length, nor that short fiction is *de facto* a shorter version of a novel. Head argues that

The assumption that short story length is relative only to the novel is plainly inadequate, and applies, again, to a hidebound critical purview more than it does to fictional practice. ... Any comparison based purely on quantity serves only to reinforce an unreasoning ‘bigger-is better’ value judgement, and to obscure the main

issue: the length question must be secondary to a consideration of *technique*. (4, emphasis in the original)

To Head, then, the short story's length correlates with the technique insofar as the former depends on the latter, and vice versa, rather than depending on one or the other. This is further explored by Davison, who, in Kimber's "Foreword" to *Katherine Mansville and the art of Short Story*, argues that both short fiction and short story have served to "evoke a brief, self-contained piece of prose-writing" (vi), but always with a diminishing tone: "Critics ... are far more likely to observe that this or that writer 'only' wrote short stories than that they 'only' wrote novels" (vi). She furthers this argument by stating that "The tenacious association of 'short in length' and secondary in importance becomes more apparent if we compare the literary appellation 'short story' ... with the name used for short forms in the other arts" (vi). With that, Davison justifies the popular direct association between short fiction and its intrinsic shortness, as Shruti Parthasarathy (n/p), E. W. (n/p), or Dyer et al. (n/p) suggest, but also gives way to ground Kimber's argument that "the short story, by its very nature, imposes different criteria on the writer to that of the novel" (5), as will be developed later. What Kimber and Davison present here is a dissociation between short and minor, and the theoretical background needed not to consider the short story merely a condensed novel. Moreover, Correia argues that the genre is concerned with "brevity and concentration in fragmentation, subjectivism, apprehension, and description of an isolated and definite moment can be seen as the literary correlative of a different worldview" (19). This metaphor responds to the elements defined above.

One of the aspects of the short story is, then, the necessity of the reader to complete the information that the narration is not providing to interpret it as a whole. In "The Lightning Tree" (Rothfuss, 2015a), the narrator does not explicitly mention that Bast is working with Kvothe. Although the narration hints it, only through a connection between the main trilogy and the short story can the reader interpret that the innkeeper, the person who "wore a clean white apron and his hair was red[;] Other than that, he was painfully unremarkable[;] His face held the doughy

placidness of bored innkeepers everywhere[;] Despite the early hour, he looked tired” (804) is Kvothe. Additionally, the reader is the one that has to clarify who stole the bottles from Crazy Martin’s still, whether Bast or Jessom Williams, the father of Rike, one of the children who appears in the story (860-61). The difference, then, in terms of worldview is that, by not having everything connected (as is usually the case in novels), the narration needs to be subjected to a process of plural interpretation by readers: there are no apparent clues that Bast is the robber, although it seems very plausible. However, there is no necessity to solve that mystery to understand or interpret the short story, because the focus, plausibly, is not that much on the character as is in magic as a pervading element of the storyworld.

Another element that defines the short story for Correia, using Rohrberger as a foundation, is its circularity: “Frequently contrasted with the novel (associated with time), the short story sense of temporality resonates against the short story spatial base, and readers move in time from beginning to the end and back again” (Correia: 19). By not telling a linear story as the novel mostly does but revolving around an idea, it is usual that characters go back to the starting point, either temporally or spatially (or both). If the definition of short story includes this aspect, however, one needs to differentiate between short prose and short stories: once stripped of a word-limit consideration, short novels are just that, whereas the short story requires these two prior aspects, a focus on spatiality and circularity, to be considered as such.

Instead, many of them focus on the differences when presenting content that is also different from what the novel usually shows. For instance, Scofield argues that the short story (although not exclusively) focuses on the concept of it, rather than in characters or plot, on what he calls, borrowing it from Kingsley Amis “the idea as hero” (Scofield: 5). In his words, short fiction, as studied by Amis regarding Science Fiction, comprises

works of fiction where a leading idea about a future state of society governed the development of the whole. But the phrase can suggest more broadly a mode of story in which the overall idea, rather than character, plot or ‘themes’ in the usual sense, dominates the conception of the work and gives it its unity or deliberate disunity ... what the short story writer’s art tries to convey is the ‘point’ of a story: that moment of understanding or cognition in which we grasp not so much ‘what the writer was getting at’, in the old phrase, as what the story may get at in its collaboration with the mind of the reader reading. (5-6)

That is to say that, similarly to the novella, the short story is more a narrative concept rather than a shortened version of the novel’s narrative schema of introduction-development-ending. Short fiction, therefore, tries to communicate one single idea or notion around which the narrative revolves. Unlike Auri’s novella, however, these two pieces of short fiction do not necessarily, according to this definition, explore the many facets of a single character, but instead focus on the origin of the universe, as it happens in “How Old Holly Came to Be”, or the idea of magic pervading the universe (which can be one of the readings of “The Lightning Tree”). The latter’s narrative, then, and agreeing with this trait of short stories, does not focus on providing insights of Bast’s psyche, even when offering them, but instead showing his relationship with the world that surrounds him and the idea of his magic silently shaping it.

Correia’s argument, supported by May, suggests that the short story is necessary to structurally understand the nature of fiction insofar as it connects with popular tale constructions (15), and further argues that the reason of its shortness comes from the differences in structure, both ontologically and epistemologically, since it focuses on psychological issues rather than on sociocultural matters (15). This connects with Scofield’s notion mentioned above of the short story being a story of ideas (5), and with Chialant and Lops’ perception of the Short Story as subjective (5), which could be a hint about why both Bast’s story and the story of Holly do not appear in novels, but rather in short stories: if these are not human creatures, the change in genre may serve as an excuse to enhance the difference

between them and Kvothe, much like Auri's novella as the channel through which her trauma appears narratologically enhanced.

Short story, however, has seen an advance from its origin as a concept up until today: “‘At the beginning of the twenty first century the recontextualization of the short story within wider visual, auditory and performance culture’ (Cox: 169) leads to a fertile hybridization of languages and codes and to a vital reconfiguration of its generic boundaries” (Chialant and Lops: 5), which means that this first section of the chapter has been an attempt of reviewing the general notions around which the concept of Short story revolves, but there are always exceptions to it.

Not every short story is circular. For instance, flash fiction, a type of short story –whose boundaries are indeed it being extremely short and in which “there has to be a feeling of plenty of space ... Better to conceive something that can be told at this length with some room left over, so that it can feel adroit, complete, and even lavish” (Tuch et al.: n/p)– usually focuses on an idea, as many short fictions, but it is often to present a narrative that shows a swift concatenation of events that leads the reader from one point to another. For instance, Lambert's “Poster Children” (2014), labeled as flash fiction by Crum (n/p), but issued under non-fiction by *Brevity Magazine* (Lambert: n/p) presents three different events in three different epigraphs that do not circulate the same idea. Instead, they are a condensed series of events that end up with the narrator and Eleanor, the main character, in prison (n/p). As stated by Chialant and Lops, this may have to do with the fact that the beginning of this century has offered to the audience a more interdisciplinary way to understand narratives and presents them said hybridization (5). For the sake of conciseness, however, it will be argued here that the short stories (that this dissertation explores) adhere to the elements that have been considered as general for the short story, including the hybridization of languages, that Chialant and Lops argued above, in terms of narratological construction. This is to say that these short stories are concerned with concentration, with a pact between the reader and the narrator in which the blanks that the latter has left behind (while presenting a fragmented story) are suggested to be interpreted by the reader in a way in which the central

idea around which the narration revolves is reinforced, as argued above: there is no need for the reader to know all the details of “How Old Holly Came to Be” to acknowledge the creation of Temerant, but rather some crucial information that can be conveyed in, approximately, 1,670 words. Something similar happens with Bast’s appearance in “The Lightning Tree”: to understand the narration as an acknowledgment of magic in Newarre, and a bit more of insight of magic within the storyworld, readers do not need to know all the details of Bast’s mischief within the storyworld –mostly present in the short stories, since the few appearances that Bast as an agent within the novels are not really representative of a mischievous character, save a few answers that he gives to his mentor, Kvothe, and instead present a character that seems to be over what in the storyworld is regarded as good or bad, as will be also explored later–, but rather know a few examples of it, and then letting them complete the narrative holes by themselves. In short, the short story will be considered a narrative that usually revolves around a fragmented idea that the reader has to reconstruct.

The categorization of “The Lightning Tree” as a short story has been subject to debate. While Walton (2014: n/p) and the Fandom Books Community page for the chronicle advertises it as a novella (n/p), Speakman (n/p), and meltotheyny (n/p) define it as a Short story. Patrick Rothfuss argues that he tried to write a short story, but that, because of length, it became a novella (2015b: n/p). These categorizations present two different reading tendencies: one whose main idea is to offer a depiction of Bast for the sake of presenting himself (and thus adheres to what has been stated about *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*), and one in which Bast is regarded the vehicle for the central idea of the narration, as has been stated in this chapter. Although both views can be explored and even combined (for, in fact, Bast is a magical, alternatively embodied character that permeates the storyworld as much as other magic elements), for the sake of further exploration of the short story, and conciseness, “The Lightning Tree” will be defined here as a short story, rather than a hybrid between both.

3. World Building in Short Stories

A short story, then, is a product that explores just one particular narrative instant that is hierarchically superior to the rest, which works as supporting elements for a better understanding of the story (Head: 5). That implies that the space that it has for world-building is somewhat limited in comparison to other media. Furthermore, as this sort of narrative revolves around an idea rather than a more traditional plot-line, this space is not only reduced but also diminished. In this section of the chapter, there will be an attempt to define different ways through which the short story can convey a storyworld without it being considered a hindrance to developing the idea around which the narration revolves.

Similar to what this research has mentioned about the novella in previous chapters, the short story can rely either on intradiegetic or extradiegetic elements to justify the storyworld in which the narration appears. As such, the narration can depend on explicit internal elements, such as descriptions of places –as happens in “The Lightning Tree”– or explicit dialogues of world-building. For instance, when Bast describes magic to Kostrel, describing that magic can take two shapes, *grammarie* and *glammourie* –“*Glammourie* is the art of making something seem. *Grammarie* is the craft of making something be” (Rothfuss, 2015a: 818)– serves not only as a way to reinforce the idea that shapes the narrative, but also serves as world-building, since it explores the supernatural force that pervades *Temerant*. Moreover, there are explicit elements that refer to an extradiegetic storyworld world-building element. That includes the appearance of recurring characters like Bast, or places that appear in other works within the same storyworld, such as the *Waystone Inn*. These elements only serve as non-arbitrary (that is, explained or meaningful) world-building details within the short story if the reader acknowledges them as part of a more prominent narration: if the reader does not know about *Kvothe* or other works in which they appear, both Bast’s name and the name of the inn can be regarded as entirely arbitrary, but they acquire more meaning within the storyworld if the reader can pinpoint the inn as a relevant place for more characters than just Bast, as readers can acknowledge that “The *Waystone Inn*” (803) is *Kvothe*’s inn. There are also

ways to make this visible for the reader without explicitly mention them. Such is the case, for instance, of the leather book that the unnamed innkeeper hands to Bast “without a hint of sarcasm” (804), which later in the narration receives the name of “*Celum Tinture*” (805), and which is the same book that Bast is reading in the first book of the main trilogy (2008: 12). While this may seem irrelevant for the reader of the short story, this detail gives readers of the novels a time framework in which both narrations appear.

However, there is also a third way, which is the complete negation of the storyworld, both intradiegetically and extradiegetically. By only revolving around a central idea, certain short stories are detached from a particular storyworld, or that could work in so many of them that the world-building becomes either infinite or null, being utterly meaningless to the narration³¹.

While this is not the case of the stories into which this research will delve, it is true that because of the same conciseness the reader expects from the short story, the reliance on extradiegetic elements is also lesser than the one in the sort of fantasy novellas that leave almost all of the worldbuilding to them. However, it is also because of this notion of defaultization of the storyworld within the short story that the reader tends to interpret that “How Old Holly Came to Be” happens in Temerant, since the only clue that the reader may find about its belonging to the

³¹ While this is not the case of any of the short stories that will be researched here, for they rely (more or less explicitly) on extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrative devices in conveying Temerant, there are certain short stories that either do not require a storyworld to be conveyed or, rather, an explicit one. In such cases, the reading tendency usually suggests that readers usually rely on memory to see whether they could fit in any previous storyworld they know (which, at least, includes one –their referential world–), or directly situate the narration on an undetermined storyworld of which they do not know anything but what has been conveyed in the short story. Parthasarathy’s short story “Tomorrow” does not require any particular storyworld but one in which there are houses, “drawers, books, [and] clothes” (n/p), and readers, in trying to associate it with any storyworld they may know, tend to associate it with their referential world, which is, for narrative purposes, a default reference. Even in some fantasy short stories, such as Gill’s “The Things They Cannot See”, the tendency to read them suggests that the disruption is made in the reader’s referential world.

same storyworld than the *Kingkiller Chronicle* appears in Patrick Rothfuss' blog, in which he states that the story is set in his storyworld (2014e: n/p). However, there are no clues for readers if they are to take the short story by itself without reading anything else. This way of presenting world-building, then, does not require the reader to know whether the story belongs to the storyworld or not, and, instead, the phenomenon is reversed: it is not the short story what acquires meaning by its association to the chronicle, but instead, the storyworld of the chronicle acquires more world-building elements that may help to understand its cosmology. One possible theory about this is that the idea around which the narrative of "How Old Holly Came to Be" revolves is, strictly, world-building, as is the role of a cosmology. In the words of March-Russel,

The Creation myth is a type of parable, but although conceived within a religious framework that considers the events to be fundamentally true, the myth describes not only in terms of moral order how the world came to be. Creation myths are the cornerstone of a culture's cosmology, of how it regards itself in relation to the universe. They describe humanity's perennial concern with origins: the search for identity. (4)

Creation myths are, then, a privileged narrative to develop world-building, as it describes the origin of a world, or, instead, how a world came to be. In epistemological terms, creation myths also define what belongs to the *pragmatikós* of the world and what belongs to the *allós* for those who believe it. However, in fiction, where the reader is suggested to think that the setting is another world, rather than their referential one, these creation myths tend to be read as valid narratives. Many readers of "How Old Holly Came to Be", for instance, tend to draw parallelisms between the main trilogy and the short story's narrative assuming *de facto* that the story is accurate and not an unreliable myth for Temerant's cosmology. As such, many of them believe that the world of Temerant appeared from wood, as stated in the story. The question of whether the narration is a cosmogony or a cosmology remains unanswered within the storyworld since there are no other references to the story in the

rest of the corpus, but, if it is not the former, the narration must be situated not too far away from the beginning of the storyworld's universe.

According to Sheridan, all high fantasy, insofar as they are fictions set in alternate worlds, are “fictions of elaboration” (11). His study focuses on the aesthetic methods that high fantasy writers use to display their creation without becoming unsatisfactory, the most efficient, but dangerous in terms of boredom, being the list: “An inquiry into the way AWFs [Alternate World Fictions] end needs to begin with an examination of listing as an aesthetic mode. Lists have a tendency (not to say a mandate) to be static, monotonous, and random ... Lacking [an implied] logic, its end is arbitrary, a ‘cessation’ not a ‘consummation’” (11). Sheridan here refers to the “felicitousness” which creation myths require in a determined interpretation, which stems from the reader's tendency to read a particular literary work in a specific manner: world-building as the main idea behind the narrative. What Sheridan is suggesting, then, is that there are certain aesthetic values behind a reader's consideration of the narrative as “felicitous” that originate in a sociopolitical context, of which the very same terms of novel, novella, and short story appear. Aesthetics, in this sense, must be considered as a conjunct in which these terms apply as the core of the aesthetic considerations that he will briefly tackle, especially in terms of reception of its closure (14). In his words, closure stands for a definitive answer to aesthetic questions, although, as Sheridan argues

By definitive answer I do not mean a conclusion that is “actually true.” I mean, instead, what Smith calls “the sense of truth” ... a “certain quality that is experienced by the reader as striking validity, a quality that leaves him [sic] with the feeling that what has just been said [is] apparently [a] self-evident truth” (Smith, 1968: 152, qtd. in Sheridan: 15).

While this closure, this apparent truth behind “How Old Holly Came to Be” as a creation myth or, at least, as a cosmology of Temerant, there appears to be a different approach in seeing “The Lightning Tree”, which suggests the difference

in understanding the narration as a short story or as a novella. Given the importance of Bast in the main trilogy, and the narrative's contrast with "How Old Holly Came to Be" against the similarities for *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, the closure of which Sheridan speaks seems to be either weaker or hidden under layers of characterization. That is one of the reasons why "The Lightning Tree" adheres most to the modernist tradition of short stories. In the words of Sheridan, "Characterization is, admittedly, seminal in the modernist story, where the *emphasis* falls on internal rather than external action. This body of short fiction ... provided much material for the character-revelation school of reading, an approach underpinned by Joyce's 'epiphany' concept, the 'sudden spiritual manifestation'" (18, emphasis in the original). The characterization process, then, is based on internal procedures (which makes the short story interesting in terms of identity, as will be suggested later), and has a climactic point in the form of an epiphany. In the case of Bast, this epiphany comes from the only moment in the short story in which he is not mischievous, but somewhat genuinely worried about Rike, a child from Newarre. After magically sending Rike's father away, the kid asks Bast for a charm that would protect himself from him. However, Rike's concern is not only with his father but also of him growing up to be a bad person, so he asks Bast to create a charm to prevent bad things to go away but, instead of it being for Rike, the child wants to give it to his mother, since, he asks, "What if sending him isn't enough? What if I grow up like my da? I get so ... I'm not good. I know it. I know better than anyone ... I got his blood in me. She needs to be safe from me. If I grow up twisted up and bad, she needs the charm to..." (Rothfuss, 2015a: 855)³². To this, Bast acknowledges Rike's suffering and hugs the boy, which is probably the first time that Bast does something non-mischievous nor egotistical within the whole short story –and, arguably, the main

³² Interestingly enough, this also makes a point regarding the normalized gender politics of which was talked in previous chapters, where women need to be protected by men, regardless of their age.

trilogy as well–, and decides to help him create a charm to protect his mother. However, Rike does not believe that she will always wear it, to which Bast internally struggles:

He looked down at the boy. He sighed. He wasn't good at this ... Glamour was second nature. It was just making folk see what they wanted to see. Fooling folk was simple as singing ... But this? Convincing someone of the truth that they were too twisted to see? How could you even begin? It was baffling. These creatures. They were fraught and frayed in their desire. A snake would never poison itself, but these folk made an art of it. They wrapped themselves in fears and wept at being blind. It was infuriating. It was enough to break a heart. (856-857).

Bast, then, realizes the differences between him and humanity and realizes that, despite his efforts, humans will always be humans, and as such, he should not stop being as he is, going back to his usual self (857-858). The interesting point of this epiphanic moment is that it comes right after a moral moment of redemption, only to see how this goodwill is suggested to be worthless. While the trope of redemption being somehow subverted is relevant in itself to develop Bast's relationship with the world in which he lives (and hence his nature as a magical entity and not a human), this is also interesting when translated to the rest of the storyworld, since this epiphany works to justify Bast's self-concernedness after a moment of weakness. Instead of it being a narrative trope to have him changing his ways of living, it serves to explain how he acts in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, only acting either for himself or for Kvothe.

4. High Dark Fantasy in Short Stories

As we have suggested earlier, these two short stories are profoundly concerned with the translation of the allós into the pragmatikós of Temerant. “The Lightning Tree” does so by focusing on the perception of magic that Faeries have, whereas “How Old Holly Came to Be” presents a cosmology with plenty of magic.

Given the narrative differences between them and the novel or the novella, its narrative presentations of magic are divergent from what appears in the main trilogy or *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. By presenting a fragmented and concise narrative, one possible connective thread for it can be understanding magic at the core of the narrative, not just as one of the tools that any character can use, but rather a character on its own.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that both short stories were categorized as companions for the main trilogy, as Fandom Books Community suggest (“How Old Holly Came to Be”: n/p; “The Lightning Tree”: n/p), and therefore fulfill a dual role, one intradiegetic and one extradiegetic. As such, and although they can be read regardless of the main trilogy and be a “felicitous” narrative product, readers who read them along with the main trilogy can interpret them differently, as part of a wider storyworld, as stated above. As such, and especially in “How Old Holly Came to Be”, the depiction of magic is complete for both the reader of the short story and for the reader of the whole storyworld. However, the consequences that this short story has in the storyworld, should the tale be true in terms of magic, produce a more significant engagement with the storyworld than to the short-story readers. That is because it adheres to the main sort of magic that faeries do in the main trilogy. When fighting with Felurian, there is a moment in which Kvothe states that

looking into Felurian’s twilight eyes, I understood her far beyond the bottoms of her feet. Now I knew her to the marrow of her bones. Her eyes were like four lines of music, clearly penned. My mind was filled with the sudden *song* of her. I drew a breath and *sang* it out in *four hard notes*. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 640, my emphases)

Similarly, in “How Old Holly Came to Be”, the narrator states that “The Lady sang a song to Holly. Holly listened. Holly bent. The Lady sang and branch became a walking stick, and that was good” (2013a: n/p). Singing seems to be at the core of magical shaping, much like what the reader receives in *The Name of the Wind* for naming:

“The name of fire,” I said slowly. “And they could have called it and the fire would have done what they said, like Taborlin the Great?” Kilvin nodded again. “But those are just stories,” I protested. He gave me an amused look. “Where do you think stories come from, E’lir Kvothe? Every tale has deep roots somewhere in the world”. (2008: 458)

There seems to be a difference between naming and singing, however, which is the nature of the named/sang element. While the things that abound in the pragmatikós of Temerant seem to have a name (like fire or people), things that belong to the supernatural sphere have songs (like Felurian, as mentioned above, or Old Holly). As such, music is treated as a different language, rather than a discipline, a language that, much like naming, works in two spheres, the waking mind and the sleeping mind: “Our waking mind is what thinks and talks and reasons. But the sleeping mind ... sees deeply to the heart of things ... Your waking mind does not understand the nature of names. Your sleeping mind does” (615). Much like the performative function of words that the storyworld presents as part of the allós, music and songs can be performative insofar as they produce a change in the world, which is what “How Old Holly Came to Be” presents. Yet the fact that these songs do not appear in the narratives (while some of the names appear mispronounced), serves to focalize the reading towards the unwritten as something secret or untranslatable, similar to trauma. With that absence, the idea of language as creation does not diminish but instead appears reinforced. This absence of words is more apparent in “How Old Holly Came to Be” than in “The Lightning Tree”, but both, as short stories are antagonistic to

“the grand narratives” ..., in which language does not just reflect but actually forms reality ..., self-consciousness about language; a tendency towards arbitrary ... uses of language, and a mixing up of linguistic styles and registers in order to ... provoke new kinds of awareness. (Scofield: 218)

The writing style of the former seems to be more experimental, and explicitly separated in tiny segments that suggest both a stanza construction of the narrative and its fragmentation, therefore explicitly connecting with music –or, at the very least,

poetry, which, in the storyworld is similar, since it is stated that, despite Kvothe's despise of poets, as mentioned earlier, "A poet is a musician who can't sing" (Rothfuss, 2008: 102)–, for instance, suggested on the parallel structure of most sentences, finishing with a variation of "and that was good" (2013a: n/p).

On the other hand, another section of the *allós*, magic, is explored in "The Lightning Tree". The form of magic that appears in the short story and the one that appears in *The Wise Man's Fear* are explicitly connected. Kvothe also learns what *grammarie* and *Glammourie* are thanks to Felurian, which uses the same words that Bast in "The Lightning Tree" (Rothfuss, 2015a: 818): "What she was doing with the shadow was called *grammarie*. When I asked, she said it was 'the art of making things be.' This was distinct from *Glammourie*, which was 'the art of making things seem'" (2011a: 663), much like Kostrel is taught by Bast in an aforementioned similar situation (2015a: 818). There are several instances in which these two sorts of magic appear in the storyworld. For example, apart from the one in which Felurian weaves a *shaed*, a cloak made of shadows (2011a: 657), which motivates the quotation above, Bast uses magic at least two times between both books. The most evident is that Bast disguises himself as a human, even though the illusion is not perfect: "At first glance, he looked to be an average... young man. But there was something different about him ... And if you had ... the sort of mind that actually *sees* ..., you might notice that his eyes were odd ... something strange and wonderful" (2008: 91-92, emphasis in the original). However, the reader is never told how *Glammourie* happens, because neither the narrator from "The Lightning Tree" nor any of the narrators of the main trilogy seem knowledgeable of this. The second instance that will be explored here in which Bast's magic is made patent explicitly is when, in "The Lightning Tree", he uses his magic to alter the mind of different female characters within Newarre with sexual purposes. In one of those cases, he plays his handcrafted shepherds' pipes to magically manipulate a shepherdess to

rape her (2015a: 810-811), indicating that the music he is playing has some supernatural effect on her³³.

Both short stories reflect on morality, although “How Old Holly Came to Be” regards it as an absolute. According to the Fandom Books Community page, in the narration, almost every action is considered “as good, bad, both, neither, or other which appears to make explicit the underlying Lethani or perhaps judgement by the God of Temerant” (“How Old Holly Came to Be”: n/p). If the narration is read as a cosmology, then such implicit speculations can be regarded as plausible, insofar as they refer to the notion of moral appearing as a supernatural entity within the world that an alternatively embodied narrative voice/character considers essential. This is a trait that appears in many high fantasy storyworlds, such as the *Dungeons and Dragons* one, in which Alignments do not only respond to “general moral and personal attitudes” (zybstrski: n/p) but are also embodied in different deities that players can associate with such alignments, in contrast with “How Old Holly Came to Be”, where moral may be attached to any of the two sources that the Fandom Books Community page explored (“How Old Holly Came to Be”: n/p). Bast’s moral compass, on the other hand, –apart from the aforementioned epiphanic moment– is governed by desire, which is why Bast’s willing to have sex goes beyond any other moral consideration than his wishes, and therefore, as mentioned above, magically rapes at least one character (Rothfuss, 2015a: 811). This short story, then, serves as the counterpart of “How Old Holly Came to Be”, insofar as it presents a character that is not too concerned with, as the Fandom Books Community page summarizes, “good, bad, both, neither, or other” (“How Old Holly Came to Be”: n/p), but rather on what he desires. That at least until he arrived in Temerant, since “He had never

³³ Once again, that rape marks part of the gender politics of the storyworld, where, as mentioned before, female characters are oppressed and manipulated, even by supernatural beings. This case is one of the most explicit ones in which said oppression is made patent, and the explicitness and exaggeration in the narration suggests a similar question to Kvothe’s sexualization of female characters. In short, the question here is whether Bast’s solution of moral dilemmas makes him think that he is over what is normalized as good or as bad is morally acceptable if he is willing to rape someone. As such, and again, the narrative suggests a reconsideration of usual literary tropes within the genre.

been in conflict with his own desire before he came *here*” (2015a: 819, my emphasis). As such, readers receive two different understandings of morality within the storyworld, which seem to respond to the two worlds that appear in the narrations. If the reader is to read the two short stories knowing that they belong to the same storyworld, and assuming that desire is what encompasses moral in the Fae World, it could be speculated then, that, by contrast, “How Old Holly Came to Be” occurs in Temerant, and therefore that these moral absolutes are at least valid there. In any case, these two short stories present two different worlds and two different moral understandings that, to be connected to the same storyworld, readers need to explore together.

Another element that makes the reader consider this as part of this consistent high dark fantasy storyworld is the treatment of dark aspects, and their derived moral dilemmas. “The Lightning Tree” is full of them, with its most prominent themes being: the poverty of rural life, rape, physical manifestations of sexism (by almost every character), and child maltreatment. Bast knows that Rike’s father has abused him and his mother, and even in the epiphanic moment in which Bast hugs him, there is a dark tincture because he hugs him “Gently, because he had seen the boy’s back” (856), implying his father’s lashes. Bast’s considering the murder of Kostrel for making questions that would compromise his secret –that he is a Fae– is another example of this darkness. The implication of death is present, and Kostrel’s being a kid enhances the darkness of Bast’s thought. Nevertheless, even though it would be “Far easier to tell the truth, then make sure something happened to the boy” (819), the narrative voice eventually shows Bast’s feelings towards making such a decision, which prevents him from murdering Kostrel: “No, he couldn’t kill this boy. That would be too hard a thing” (819). A third moment where darkness within the narrative appears is the twisting of magic that Bast does to manipulate the mind of several female characters to have sex with them (810-811, 838-839, 849-850).

In “How Old Holly Came to Be”, however, darkness appears more subtly, and always as an objective form against which the characters fight, thus falling

more into the high fantasy than into the dark one. Yet there are certain dark aspects in the narration. The story presents a romantic relationship between the man and the lady, after which the lady comes back to the tower “and wept” (2013a: n/p) in four sentences of a four-sentence paragraph. The implications of depression (or, at least, sadness) may be drawn from just this paragraph in the short story; having a character that weeps after (or during) each action that she performs, thus suggesting a darker, non-explicitly stated, situation, a moment that is never narrated but is sad for the Lady. However, if readers are to connect the short story to the rest of the storyworld, they may find the same sentence closure on the third day of *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, where “Auri wept” (2014a: 77). The connection between the two characters is made linguistically patent, which enhances the notion of sadness and darkness that readers are suggested to interpret.

5. Conclusions

Both Short stories, then, present similar elements in two different ways, or, rather, similar adherences to the high dark fantasy definition that has been argued in this dissertation. In both short stories, the reader can see world-building, but, while in “The Lightning Tree” this world-building is done through the main character, who explains how magic works, the narrative of “How Old Holly Came to Be” focuses on how Temerant was in its creation. However, only by relying on extradiegetic elements can readers notice that these two stories belong to the same storyworld, for “How Old Holly Came to Be” does not present any explicit mention regarding where it is set. However, by both knowing publishing clues and acknowledging plausible similarities between the storyworld from the main trilogy and the one from the short stories, both stories can be included within the storyworld.

The appearance of Alternate Worlds Short Fiction is not new, nor using different genres within the same storyworld –see, for instance, the novella *Tur*

(Bende) within the series of novels *The Elsker Saga*– but, in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, these genre considerations are based on the topic about on which the narrative focuses. In so doing, the storyworld enhances the differences in mindset, embodiment, and identity, as will be seen later for the short stories, by using different narratological devices, even to the point of changing the format of the narration to strengthen this sensation of difference. As such, these two short stories, insofar as they focus on two creatures that are regarded as non-humans, with alternate embodiments (especially patent in their alternate bodies) use a different format than the main trilogy, which mostly deals with a character that, although he has acquired the category of legend because of his deeds, is human, and, in fact, trying to debunk his own myth. That is different than to say, however, that the central point of the narration is the development of these characters. That would be against what has been considered here a short story. Instead, what the narrative does is to suggest the reader a change in the elements in which the narrative voice focuses. In other words, while the main character may or may not be human, the fact that “The Lightning Tree” is mostly concerned with non-human creatures, as it is “How Old Holly Came to Be” as well, shapes the narration to the format of the short story, which differentiates from Auri’s novella insofar as *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* is concerned with a broken, traumatized, alternate mindset.

The narrative further suggests this connection between narrative form and narrative content in terms of the tradition on which they nurture. While Bast’s short story enroots better with a modernist short fiction –“with its sparseness of detail and objective stance” (Iftekharrudin et al.: xi)–, Holly’s seems to adhere more to the folk-myth direct line that, according to Iftekharrudin et al. suggest, magical realism draws, presenting “reality as what is absurd, and the absurd, the magical, the transcendent as what is real” (x). As such, the two narratives imply a concern not only on format but also on tradition, insofar as the oldest, most mythical one, adheres to the folktale tradition, whereas “The Lightning Tree” adheres more to the modernist one, thus presenting different traditions for two different creatures that, neither of them being human, possess an alternate embodiment.

The reader is also able to see two kinds of elements of dark fantasy. The first ones are explicit mentions of darker narrative elements that are either left as things that happen, such as the casual mention of Crazy Martin having “tabard madness” after he “pulled his full rail in the king’s army. Eight years” (Rothfuss, 2015a: 841, 862), which can be easily paralleled with PTSD (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs: n/p), or, similarly, the same character punching a tinker for “getting all handsy with young Jenna ... And she was younger still back then, mind you” (Rothfuss, 2015a: 864), as well as the Lady’s weeping (2013a). On the other hand, readers may find elements of dark fantasy actively performed by any of the main characters, such as the ones explored earlier in this chapter, like considering child murdering or magical rape.

However, it is interesting to note that the case of “How Old Holly Came to Be” is, perhaps, the least dark of all the narratives from the storyworld. The reason for this is that the folktale, be it a myth, a legend, a fable, a folktale, or a faerie story (or magic tale), have a succinct tendency towards being read as didactic (Sorrentino: n/p). As such, their ideas on moral –transmitting what is correct and what is not according to societal values– must be unambiguous and instead, present a clear depiction of, as summarized in Fandom Books Community, what is “good, bad, both, neither, or other” (“How Old Holly Came to Be”: n/p), as “How Old Holly Came to Be” does.

Chapter 8: Alternate Embodiments and their Relationship to Identity

“Is it true that a faerie can never lie?” “Some can’t,” Bast said. “Some don’t like to. Some are happy to lie but wouldn’t ever go back on promise or break their word.” He shrugged. “Others lie quite well, and do so at every opportunity.” (Rothfuss, 2015a: 816)

Old Holly bent, and as he was a man, he brushed her cheek with his own bark-rough hand. The Lady wept, and laughed, and left. And that was both and neither and all and other. (2013a: n/p)

1. Introduction

This chapter will deal with how identity is related to non-normative embodiments, focusing on those appearing in the two short stories set in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s storyworld, namely their main characters, Holly and Bast. To do that, first, there will be a brief review of what can be considered a non-normative embodiment and the implications it has regarding identity. Then, the chapter will go on to the alternate embodiments that these two short stories present and will reflect on their connection to identity. Finally, the chapter will focus on fantasy settings and their application of non-normative embodiments by exploring theories of mental spaces, possible worlds, and liminality. The aim of this chapter, then, is to suggest that, similarly to what happens in the novella, the short stories’ format and content allows the reader to interpret that non-normative embodiments (either human or non-human) are suggested to have a different identity-building process, and thus require an internal and an external manifestation of it. If, as Uszkalo argues, “Our understanding of the world is necessarily embodied” (4), then it is necessary to study embodiment as one of the determining factors for identity building.

2. Alternate Embodiments: Posing the Notion of Non-normative Bodies

In order to clarify what non-normative is in terms of embodiment (Smith: 1), the perception of a character as a whole must be separated according to the rules that pervade the storyworld and are, therefore, normative within it. Thus, it seems necessary to apply Jansen and Wehrle's argument when discussing normality in terms of embodiment (39). Since this chapter deals with a fantasy storyworld in which there are different reasoning-capable creatures, apart from humans, readers do not only receive input about, for instance, the character's social class (or lack thereof), but also of their body differences. Thus, apart from the ones that exist in the referential world –age, gender, sex, race, social class, and others (as implied in Stanback: 10)–, this chapter will also consider the sort of creature that a particular character is for a consideration of non-normative embodiments.

Emily B. Stanback, on her study of what she calls “Aesthetics of Disability” during Romanticism, argues that within traditional considerations of embodiments there is a differentiation between three types of bodies, mainly the “‘proper body’: English, white, able-bodied, rational, and, ideally, male” (10), opposed to monstrosity, “a particular subset of ... bodies, rare or even singular kinds of embodiment, rather than relatively typical ones like deafness, madness and scrofula” (10), leaving the third type, the “relatively typical ones”, in a sort of limbo between these two categories that suggest disregard towards them. Similarly, in medical terms, the difference between disabled and deformed suggested a boundary of sorts, the latter being much more embodied in individuals than the former:

Culture at large participated in the discursive and aesthetic framing of diseases and, like medicine, helped to establish norms of embodiment from which the sick could be said to (hopefully) only temporarily digress. By the late eighteenth century there were complex aesthetic conventions built around several common illnesses ... In popular visual representations, symptoms and illnesses, particularly those that were temporary and/or less dangerous, often took on an aesthetic life of their own; by

appearing as separate entities from the sick individual, they were represented as things that came upon the body from without, rather than as inextricable aspects of a person's identity or a quality inherent to the body that suffered from them. (15)

With “disabled and deformed”, Stanback does not only refer to malformations. As she states a bit later, alternate embodiments were important in determining what was considered as normal, and thus, categories like sex, race, or gender performance, as she argues, were taken into account in order to establish a paradigm of what was able-bodied (20) and what was not: “For instance, the non-normativity of racial and ethnic others, as well as bodies that failed to conform to normative notions of gender and sexuality, was established by many of the same processes that marked bodies as medically non-normative, or ‘disabled’” (11). Regarding this chapter, then, the implications of these notions are twofold: first, it should be questioned whether, in terms of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld, where everything is as embodied as the reader is capable of receiving (that is, there is no more epistemological knowledge than the text the reader produces), there is a differentiation between deformation and disability as suggested in Stanback's study; In other words, to explore whether the distinction between deformed and disabled bodies is made patent and the consequences of such. Second, if such a difference exists or not, there should be a discussion on how that affects the identity discourse.

First, this storyworld, as many fantasy settings, presents a canvas in which referential world abstract entities are embodied, thus acquiring a precise identity, hence suggesting that all identities are embodied. The reader receives information about each embodiment of the creatures that populate both the allós and the pragmatikós of the storyworld. However, as Naomi Rokotnitz argues, “the suggestion that all cognition is embodied does not imply that all abstract conceptions are generated by motor mechanisms; the embodied cognition hypothesis is not so reductive ... Interaction appears to be the defining characteristic of embodied cognition” (5). Again, it seems necessary for an individual to interact with the surroundings to consider an identity embodied. That would explain one of the reasons why readers of the storyworld tend to

acknowledge its cosmogony as true: apart from the fact of only receiving one source of information on how the storyworld was created, each character appearing in that cosmogony is embodied, which adds a layer of solidity to a story. Thanks to what Rokotnitz names, quoting Clark, “cognitive scaffolding” to acquire epistemological knowledge (Rokotnitz: 7), readers sustain their understanding of the storyworld. Furthermore, by having entities embodied in the storyworld, the narration suggests a connection between readers and the Alloic beings that populate the storyworld through empathic links, insofar as the depiction of their embodiment enhances similarity between these two groups.

Nonetheless, this empathic link also serves as a scale in which the two identities are compared and contrasted, including in terms of humanoid-like embodiments. Applying the Theory of Mind, in which “humans assume that others have a mental and emotional life more or less comparable to their own and thereby infer other individuals’ intentionality” (8) to embodied entities, readers contrast not only beings which have similar bodies but different mindsets, as was the case of Auri, but also their embodiment with those that appear in the storyworld that they perceive, that make such a mental and emotional life plausible. In fact, as both Rokotnitz, and Ford and Brown’s study on the surfing body suggests, the body seems to be as important for the empathic expression as mental and emotional wording. In words of Ford and Brown,

the body is a multidimensional phenomenon that is at once a source, location and means for society. The adoption of a principled eclecticism that seeks to find key points of connection between these and the practical, interacting and storytelling perspectives of the body outlined here is full of potential insight for the understanding of surfing ... In developing more rounded bodily present accounts, the emotions can be seen to act as the ontological ‘glue’ that binds, bridges and connects the practical ... body with the social spaces that it occupies and the signifiers that would represent it. (148)

While it seems obvious to state that the body is important because of its emotion-expressing capabilities in the real world, it poses different questions

regarding fantasy settings, especially the ones that appear here. The first one is to what extent the transformation of Old Holly in a man accounts for its capability of expressing emotions. Catriona Mackenzie, on her study of “Imagination, identity, and self-transformation” within the collection of which she is one of the chief editors, *Practical identity and narrative agency* asks similar questions to the previous one, however in more generalist terms:

What makes a being a person, as distinct from some other kind of entity? And which capacities are essential to personhood such that loss of these capacities might make someone no longer a person? ... This is the problem of individuation. And on what basis should we reidentify a person as numerically the same despite qualitative differences over time or under different descriptions? This is the problem of reidentification. Yet another set of concerns relates to questions concerning characterization. Which characteristics (character traits, motivations, values, mental and bodily capacities and dispositions, emotional attachments, commitments, memories, and so on) make a person the particular person that she is? And when might significant change to these characteristics warrant the judgment, whether by the person herself or by others, that she is a different or no longer the same person even if numerically she is the same? (2008a: 121)

This is where the second question, whether the fact that identity discourse is affected by deformation/disability is worth discussing, comes into play. In this storyworld, the appearance of different embodied creatures seemingly rational and capable suggests different understandings of what personhood is. Even from Kvothe’s point of view in *The Wise Man’s Fear*, the notion of person is used indistinctly for humans and faeries –consider, for instance, “Sometimes a person is actually more than one person, technically speaking. The Earl of Svanis is, by strange inheritance, also the Viscount of Tevn. One man, but two different political entities” (Rothfuss, 2011a: 418). A similar use of the term is used when talking about the Fae court: “Still, I learned things from these stories: a thousand small, scattered facts about the Fae. The names of the courts, old battles, and notable *persons*” (654, my emphasis)–. The narration, then, suggests that personhood is not essentially human,

and therefore not conditioned that much by the creature's embodiment, but rather a category that should be questioned.

In fantasy, as in most speculative fiction, this question is deepened by the fact that other creatures may have their category of personhood. Personhood, then, in this context, must be understood as a mutable category within reasoning creatures that suggests the capacity to be perceived as a singular entity within a group of similar beings, characterized with particular traits that are essential for having it defined as such (as suggested in *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, edited by Atkins and Mackenzie). Therefore, the differences between races must be seen, in terms of identity, from a unifying perspective: while it is not the same to be a Fae person than a human person, the philosophical concept of personhood applies to both races, and, at least in the case of *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* storyworld, their embodiment is crucial for their conceptualization of personhood.

Mackenzie argues that personhood—the capacity to be regarded as a “fully functioning and accepted member of adult society, or, in the case of children, who is considered to being on the way to being a fully functioning and accepted member of adult society” (Appell-Warren: n/p)—, needs to answer to three different problems, which resound on identity concerns. The question of individuation, which, in terms of embodiment (Mackenzie, 2008b: 1), suggests the physiological qualities that beings must have to be considered as functional (1), is the first one to be studied here. That parallels what appeared in chapters 4 and 5 regarding trauma and identity, since both the psychological and the physical deal with personhood. However, for the sake of conciseness, this section will deal with the bodily conceptualization of personhood.

Note that there is not a single example of the word person within “How Old Holly Came to Be”, while in “The Lightning Tree” the notion appears seven times. While the word count between both short stories is quite different, this could also suggest the anthropological construction of personhood: in “How Old Holly Came to Be”, the reader is informed that the story takes place even before societies appear

as they do in Kvothe's chronotope. Similarly, the only groups that appear as physiologically similar do not appear as persons. This could suggest that, since personhood is, essentially, a sociological term, either these are non-functional beings within society (as it seems by the fact that they are subjugated by a powerful entity that rules over them), or, alternatively, that their grouping is not cognitively conceived as a society, therefore not acquiring the necessary social interaction to differentiate persons from non-persons.

Both in "The Lightning Tree" and in the main trilogy, the notion of personhood appears as a word never defined but implying determined physiological traits. Even when dealing with psychological characteristics and disabilities, most of them are expressed in embodiment terms. When Bast is confronting Kvothe about whether Crazy Martin, the character defined as having "tabard madness" (Rothfuss, 2015a: 841), is crazy or not, Bast states that "I'm not even saying I don't like him. But trust me. I know crazy. *His head isn't put together like a normal person's.*" (841, my emphasis). Likewise, the word person is also associated with facts, with actions. When Rike asks Bast for help to make his father disappear, he states that "I can't think what that would do to her, if she knew I was the sort of *person that would kill his own da.*" (833, my emphasis). At the same time, when Rike offers Bast the river stone, he takes his hand away, saying: "'Don't be stupid,' he snapped. 'It's not for me. The charm is only going to work for one *person*. Do you want that to be me?'" (854, my emphasis), suggesting that, if he touches it, the person that the charm will protect is Bast rather than Rike's mother. These examples indicate that the notion of personhood in "The Lightning Tree" is deeply connected to be embodied, even by the linguistic constructs that characters use. At the same time, while that embodiment may change within the different societies, personhood is both earned through a particular behavior, as well as something essential from the embodiment of the creature, as the examples suggest.

The second problem to be tackled, according to Mackenzie is the problem of reidentification, which "is concerned with the logical relation of identity and with specifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for a person at one time being the

same numerically identical person at a later time” (2008b: 4). If, instead of what Mackenzie, using Baker as the primary source, considers –that “What makes us persons is the capacity for a personal life and what makes us the same person over time is unanalyzable in more basic terms than continuity of the first-person perspective” (7)–, personhood is deeply enrooted within embodiment, insofar as it is related with agency, as she suggests (11), then, as Kim Atkins argues, it is so because the relationship between agency and embodiment is not separated: “There is only the original unity of one’s carnate existence: a ‘body-subject,’ that is the practical expression of the primitive motility, sensitivity, and receptivity of human embodiment (86). This would be suggested within “The Lightning Tree” through the two Rike examples that have appeared here, and one more: When having dinner at the tavern, “Cob reached out and took the heel of the bread, a right he claimed as the oldest person there, despite the fact that he wasn’t actually the oldest, and the fact that nobody else much cared for the heel” (Rothfuss, 2015a: 858-859). While, at first, this may seem to contradict embodiment in terms of external identity, what is being suggested here is subjectivity over epistemological objectivity, at least in terms of personhood. Cob is not the oldest, and either the rest of the table allows him to consider himself so because they do not care, or the discourse that Cob has constructed regarding his identity affects the reading that others perceive. That leads to the third problem that Mackenzie suggests regarding personhood, the issue of characterization.

Characterization, “the sense of continuity of the self across time” (Mackenzie, 2008b: 14), is not only psychological: Embodiments change throughout time without it meaning that a person has stopped being perceived as such (14). Even when meeting persons that an individual has not seen in some time, such an individual can read through the person’s embodiment (sometimes after a few hints) to find the similarities between the previous individual’s text on the person and the new input that they are receiving (as suggested in 14). In other words, individuals tend to recognize other individuals, which, in words of Nikolaj Lübecker, is one of the two main terms related to the “imaginary *production* of communities (whereas

alienation, reification, etc. point to the *destruction* of communities)” (4, emphasis in the original). That is to say, characterization, insofar as it is the genesis for future recognition, both from an inner perspective and from an outer perspective, constructs how individuals manifest themselves, and thus leads (or not) to recognition (Mackenzie, 2008b: 14). Embodiment takes part on characterization: not only regarding poses, body language, and other traits that can be easily adapted, but also other characteristics, such as the capacities that an embodiment has, or physical similarities and dissimilarities, insofar as they are related to the “actions, intentions, goals, and emotional commitments of past phases in one’s life as a human being” (14). The more the idea one has over another individual is recognizable, the more this individual seems part of the community (14).

While this may be common knowledge, its applications regarding inner and outer personhood may not be so. Insofar as individuals recognize other individuals, and therefore part of their community, they establish connections between those who belong and those who do not, tending towards generalization through similitudes, as mentioned before in chapter 2 (see, for instance, McLeod: n/p; Tajfel and Turner). In other words, the more a being is similar to those who a particular individual considers part of their community, the more likely this being will be considered as part of the community. In other words, where reidentification could potentially explain why some people argue that certain embodiment traits, such as particular ethnicities, ages, physical capacities, or genders, are essential to be regarded as a person –while variations from what they consider standard decrease the person value of that individual– and some others (such as myself) do not, characterization, in terms of embodiment, refers to the idea that one has over another individual regarding actions and intentions. That inevitably leads to ableism, insofar as the perception of a person must have certain traits from which an individual can infer that an embodiment was able to perform a specific action.

Thanks to the different remarks that Kvothe makes throughout the whole *Chronicle*, as well as to the ones that the third-person narrator does in almost every story from the storyworld, we can consider that the normative embodiment in this

storyworld is a middle class, young, educated, white, human, cisgender, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, exemplified, among others, in Chronieler and Simmon. Thus, any other character that does not share these traits could be regarded, in a varying degree, non-normative embodiments. Interestingly enough, neither of the protagonists from the books of the storyworld is, according to the characteristics that have been stated here, normative: Kvothe, a low-class young educated Ruh human cisgender male heterosexual and non-disabled, Auri, a low-class young undetermined human undetermined female heterosexual and non-disabled, Bast, a high-class young educating Fae cisgender male heterosexual and non-disabled, and the woman and Old Holly, from which we know, respectively, that they are human, female, heterosexual, able-bodied and then non-able-bodied, and undetermined tree non-able-bodied respectively. Magic, insofar as it has appeared as widely varied, has not been included within this normative/non-normative axis due to its Alloic nature (as far as the reader can grasp from the storyworld, Fae magic, and naming, among others, are quite different among them), but instead included within ableism, since it strictly depends on the varying embodiments of the characters.

While most of these traits have been explored individually in terms of narrative and identity, and therefore they do not require in-depth exploration of them, it is preferable to review those which specifically affect this storyworld, as well as exploring how the different traits affect the Speculative Fiction specific ones. It can be easily argued that gender, social class, sexual orientation, and ableism (in non-magic terms) pervade many narratives ranging from fantasy to Academic articles. However, the fact that many reasoning-capable creatures within *The Kingkiller Chronicle's* can provide their point of view should be studied here.

Helen Young's *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness*, focusing on the trope of orcs populating the many fantasy settings in which they appear, argues that, even in the less racialized examples, they are represented as the other, as the element that differs from the Western-like races (103). Even when siding with other races, such as Humans and Elves in the videogame *Warcraft III* (2002), in which she focuses, their coalition is merely functional against a more

significant other –in this example, the demon Burning Legion, who seeks to annihilate all life from Azeroth– (Young: 103), and said pact only lasts while there is a more significant threat, soon breaking again as the next videogame entry set in the same storyworld, *World of Warcraft* (in 2004), and the most recent movie (Jones, in 2016) indicates. This sensation of otherness is reinforced by the fact that, according to the Warcraft canon, orcs arrive at Azeroth through a mysterious Dark Portal fueled by souls. Orcs, then, are presented in the first two games (*Warcraft, Orcs and Humans*, and *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness*) as barbaric, violent invaders. Essentially, then, what was presented there was a normative Western civilization that was invaded by barbaric “aliens” that aimed to destroy their world as was built (*Orcs and Humans*). In terms of embodiment, however, the main distinction between the Allied forces (including humans, dwarves, and elves) and the Orcs was that the latter had green skin where the allied forces were mostly white, and that is not part of the orc’s alien nature or of their being influenced by evil forces (Young: 94). Orcs in *Warcraft II* befriended one of the many races that populate Azeroth, Trolls, which are also green-skinned. As the manual suggests:

The Trolls of Lordaeron have suffered ages of attrition at the hands of the Humans, Dwarves, and Elves. The appearance of the Orcish Horde has given them the opportunity to ally themselves with kindred spirits with whom they can seek revenge upon their many enemies. More agile than the brutish Orcs, Trolls employ throwing axes - along with a cunning attack and retreat stratagem - to assail their foes. This combination of speed, range and the ability to bring down threats from above makes them a valuable addition to the Orcish Horde. (“Axethrower”: n/p)

What is more interesting in terms of embodiment here is that, as in many fantasy works, each race is capable of doing something particular, thus suggesting that, in terms of ableism, certain races are unable to perform specific tasks within other races’ societies. This is seen, for instance, in the case of Trolls, before *World of Warcraft*, they were the only ones shown as capable of throwing axes (no other units within the game throw axes, as “Warcraft II Units”: n/p suggests). Similarly, Dwarves, Gnomes, and Goblins are the races capable of using technology decently,

as suggested, once again, by the units that appear within the video-games, Goblin Sappers, Gnomish Submarine and Gnomish Flying Machine, and Demolition Squad (n/p). If ableism is understood in terms of cultural privileges due to body capacities, or, using Campbell's definition, "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human [or dwarven, or elvish, and so on]" (2001: 44), meaning then that disability is a state of being less than such standards, then race, in terms of fantasy-specific creatures capable of doing different things than the normative embodiment of the storyworld is, essentially, a category of ableism, at least in the specific instances in which a society marginalizes an individual due to their incapability to perform particular actions for their being an entirely different creature.

While there are no orcs in *The Kingkiller Chronicle*, the storyworld does suggest a clear separation between two humanoid races, namely the Fae and the Humans. As explained earlier, however, the Fae fulfill a similar role here in terms of alternate embodiments. For instance, Bast, who is a Fae, not only looks down on almost every character that he finds throughout "The Lightning Tree", but also separates (and feels separated from) humans based on the embodiment differences between them, as it was suggested when comparing humans and snakes (Rothfuss, 2015a: 857). Because he is capable of performing magic, he considers humanity as disabled (as intuited in the use of "manling" in *The Wise Man's Fear*, especially by Felurian, as can be seen in Rothfuss 2011a: 667, 668, or 671, for instance, echoed by Bast in 987), and therefore, inferior creatures. Similarly, Kvothe usually remarks on the differences between him and the Fae, as well as between him and other characters basing his judgments on the capacities he (and society) considers to be standard and weighing the people he meets based on that scale (as in the case of Tempi, who he first considers disabled, incapable of talking, to later understanding that he was utterly wrong about it). Both Bast and Kvothe, thus, base their views towards the other on racist prejudices but essentially crystallize in terms of ableism. Bast respects Kvothe because he can perform magic (as far as the reader knows),

and Kvothe assesses characters based on their intellectual and physical capacities. As problematic as it is to merge these two categories in the referential world (Kres-Nash: n/p), the storyworld does suggest a rebellion against said merging, having every main character implying ableist and racist thoughts and prejudices to find someone that counterargues such beliefs, and indicating a certain redemption. Even when not, especially in the case of Bast, the scenes in which such thoughts are present, such as, for instance, the previously mentioned scenes where Rike takes part, are usually suggesting darkness in terms of moral behavior, highlighting them so the reader can reflect upon them.

One example of this can be found in the way in which Bast's narrator talks about women from the short story, even when using similar adjectives for his acting. The first example, the rape of the shepherdess in the forest mentioned above, uses animal imagery to represent both the behavior of Bast and the one from the shepherdess. However, where Bast "looked like a stalking cat. He looked like he were dancing" (Rothfuss, 2015a: 811), the shepherdess' paragraphs are full of references to farm animals, acting as one: "The shepherdess perked up at the sound of it, or so it seemed at first. She lifted her head, excited ... but no. She didn't look in his direction at all. She was merely climbing to her feet to have a stretch, rising high up onto her toes, hands twining over her head" (810), or "The shepherdess laughed then, but she was pointedly looking at the other end of the valley. Perhaps the sheep had done something humorous. Yes. That was surely it. *They could be funny animals at times*" (811, my emphasis). Note that the way the short story is conveyed allows an interpretation from the reader in which the word "animals" refers not only to the sheep the shepherdess is watching. By having Bast compared to a hunter and the human shepherdess to a farm animal, the implications are not only from a highly patriarchal gender perspective but also a creatural, ableist view: the same way that the shepherdess looks at sheep is how Bast looks at inferior creatures. There is nothing that the Shepherdess could have done to evade Bast's approach since he was magically concealed. As Bast explains to Kostrel, after a brief comparison of him being a fisher and the kid a fish (817), "almost everything

[Fae] do is either Glammourie or Grammarie” (818). Similarly, when bathing in the river, Bast is visited by “A flock of sparrows. Several flocks, perhaps” (825):

And if Bast didn't see the bushes moving either? Or note that in among the hanging foliage of the willow branches there were colors normally not found in trees? Sometimes a pale pink, sometimes blushing red. Sometimes an ill-considered yellow or a cornflower blue. And while it's true that dresses might come in those colors ... well ... so did birds. Finches and jays. And besides, it was fairly common knowledge among the young women of the town that the dark young man who worked at the inn was woefully nearsighted.

The sparrows twittered in the bushes as Bast worked at the drawstring of his pants again. (825)

With this, the narration is not only suggesting that these admirers are animal-like, hiding behind a bush to observe Bast's bathing. Although that alone would serve the purpose of implying that Bast considers himself (because of his capacities) over humans, the narration does also suggest that it is unimportant whether these were actual humans or not. In other words, what is being suggested here is that, to Bast, there are those who are sentient, rational, capable of performing Glammourie and Grammarie, and those who are unable as a collective. It is more critical, in Bast's scale, to be capable of doing these two sorts of magic, than to be sentient or rational, hence the comparison with the flock. In short, by using analogies in which Bast is always the hunter, and humans are the prey –“Bast grinned like a beartrap” (823), “The shift from Emberlee to a glamoured pig obviously left him feeling more than slightly appalled. Bast waited a moment for him to recover (822), or “[Bast] hated it. It was so simply singular before. Want and have. See and take. Run and chase. Thirst and slake” (819)– the short story suggests that it is not that much a matter of Bast considering humans inferior to Faeries than a matter of gender or any other trait of embodiment.

“How Old Holly Came to Be” is even more explicit in terms of racial capacities. Old Holly, the sentient Holly tree that meets a Lady and a Man. After the Man and the Lady part ways (allegedly in bad terms), the tree starts

communicating with the Lady after she goes back to where Old Holly is rooted, is a mere spectator during the first third of the roughly 1,670-words short story of what happens around it, until the moment in which “The Holly changed, which was both” (2013a: n/p). After that moment, Old Holly appears as a masculine figure that interacts with the Lady (in a limited way), for instance, providing her with a walking stick, or bending to rescue her when she falls from him (n/p). Throughout the short story, Holly never explicitly speaks, not even when the Lady sings to transform him into a man to defend them against a Shadow, some “great black wolves, with mouths of fire ... [and] men who had been bent halfway into birds” (n/p) that only appear to be later destroyed, after which he returns to the Lady, who tells him that she must leave (n/p). Old Holly attempts to go with her, but the Lady tells him to remain there, where she will return eventually, to which he responds by making her another walking stick from his boughs, “and as he was a man, he brushed her cheek with his own bark-rough hand” (n/p). As far as the story goes, the Lady never returns, and he remains there a long time (n/p).

In terms of racial capacities, there are a few different actions that only each of the many characters can do given their embodiment. It would be unthinkable, for instance, to make the Lady bent her boughs to make something out of them. The fact that Old Holly can tear parts of his body and make things for the Lady (i.e., the Walking stick) is remarkable in a fantasy setting where magic exists. There is no reason behind not having her stretching her arms to create a bone-walking stick, for instance, but the need for internal coherence with the rest of the storyworld. As such, the Lady, about whom the reader only knows that she is presented with the feminine pronoun (and that she needs a walking stick, which will be reviewed later) must belong to one of the races that the storyworld has presented up to the point of the story’s publication or, at least, that said race is incapable of doing so. If it is the former, the reader receives a clue about what sort of creature she is (either of the two primary sentient races that have been presented in the storyworld, unless the reader considers the Chandrian yet another sentient race), and, if the latter, a race that, in terms of body-shaping, acts as these two.

Likewise, it would have been adequate to the storyworld that the tree had not a voice since Old Holly does not have a mouth as far as the reader knows. However, in the storyworld, there is a tree capable of talking within the storyworld: The Chtaeh, the malignant tree that Kvothe encounters when walking around the Fae land (2011a: 683). Yet “How Old Holly Came to Be” presents us a character unable to speak, even when turned into a man. With that, the story is suggesting a focus on alternate ways to communicate apart from speaking that are as univocal as uttering words, since the Lady seems to have no problem whatsoever in understanding Old Holly.

Only three characters seem to be able to speak in the short story: The Man, the Lady, and the Shadow that was bent in the shape of a Man. But Old Holly, even when bent into a man, is unable to do so. In not being able to speak, Old Holly cannot bend anything apart from his body and self, thus being separated from the Lady. This may be one of the reasons why Old Holly is asked to stay: while he is able to defend the tower in which the Lady used to live (as fighting against the Shadow, the wolves and the half-men-half-birds suggest), he is told by the Lady that out there was dangerous (2013a: n/p), and therefore he should not go. In so doing, the narration poses the question of gender under a matter of ableism: a Lady who needs a walking stick is more able to deal with danger than a strong mute tree-man. That is, in the storyworld, magic overcomes physical prowess.

In having the Lady bending Old Holly into a mute man, but having the Chtaeh as a previous example of a talking tree, the reader is suggested, again, two options: either the Lady did not give Old Holly the capacity to speak, or Old Holly is fundamentally incapable of doing so (and thus separated from the Lady because of his disability), both of them point to ableism but under two different perspectives. The first one would suggest ableism or, at least, creatural supremacism (that is, a form of expressing racism within the storyworld), whereas the latter responds to the same dynamic as in the case of the *Warcraft* example: each creature is capable of their things, and complementing (but not merging, nor cultural/physical mixing/inbreeding) is necessary. The fact that the Lady turned the tree into a man

suggests the former, and the narration indicates that humanoids are superior to other creatures insofar as it is required from them to turn into humanoids to be more powerful, which can also be seen in the Shadow that is bent to resemble a man, who leads over wolves and half-humans (2013a: n/p).

It seems necessary to not overlook the fact that the Lady uses a walking stick after she “turned her foot upon a stone, and that was bad. She leaned against his trunk and frowned, and that was bad. The Lady sang a song to holly. Holly listened. Holly bent. The Lady sang and branch became a walking stick, and that was good. She walked and leaned on him, and that was good” (2013a: n/p), thus being the only character from the short story having a motor divergence. Not even Old Holly, who instead of legs has roots (even when in Man form), has a physical variation that suggests that his moving is problematic. Yet the Lady seems to need one, although it is never specified why. This divergence suggests two things: First, that the Lady asks Old Holly to defend them not because she is virtually unable to do so, but because she needs a walking stick (and therefore she would be, allegedly, disadvantaged in a combat situation); second, that said motor divergence complements Old Holly’s staying in the setting in which the narration takes place. The first would suggest that ableism is pivotal for understanding the storyworld and that other non-normative alterities, such as gender or the type of creature that a character is are not as crucial as the feats that the character can perform or not. In so doing, the narration suggests that the Lady cannot defend the setting by herself not because she is a lady or because she is a humanoid, but instead because she needs a walking stick. The second, on the other hand, suggests that a direct order from the Lady can make Old Holly to not move for centuries, whereas she, having a motor functional diversity, leaves the place without much problem, thus reinforcing the power of words within the storyworld, as suggested in previous chapters. Whether this order is magical or not, readers cannot know. They know that the Lady can perform magic, turning Old Holly into a Man, but said magic appears within the narrative explicitly as singing. The ambiguity that this scene presents between the Lady magically compelling him to stay and Old Holly’s

willingness to obey without the Lady needing to magically bind him to the place suggests that the importance does not lie as much on the reason by which he stays but on the fact that the Lady, even needing a walking stick, leaves Old Holly behind (n/p).

All in all, both short stories revolve around non-normative embodiments, in which, on the one hand, the main character feels superior to the rest of the creatures that he finds, either human or not, based on his capacity to perform Grammarie and Glammourie. Even Kostrel's life, the life of the kid to which Bast tells about the Fae, is treaded as if it were something that Bast would not hesitate to take easily (819). On the other hand, the two non-normative embodiments that can be found in "How Old Holly Came to Be" present two different ways to suggest that these embodiments are subdued to the capacities they have: it does not matter whether the main character is a tree or not as long as he is capable of defending the tower, whereas the Lady is still able to perform magic by singing. Similar to what appeared by analyzing the example of the *Warcraft* storyworld, in the short stories of *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s storyworld is suggested that embodiments are subject to their capabilities. Should anyone take away the specific capacity that makes that creature unique, such a being would be regarded either as disabled or as not belonging to the community of creatures of which it once belonged.

3. Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the notion of alternate embodiments to explore how it relates to identity. To do that, the chapter has suggested that embodiment is essential for both external and personal identity and that fantasy storyworlds, such as the one from *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s, are deeply influenced by this. This is further reinforced by the fact that in the fantasy storyworld, as in many others (such as, for instance, the *Warcraft* one), the many creatures that populate them have

essential traits that differentiate them from other races, not only in terms of physical differences, such as skin tone or height but also in terms of physical capacities.

This chapter has focused mainly on alternate embodiments as key to understanding the identity of the two main characters of the two short stories. In so doing, the chapter has reflected on the importance of the application of the term “alternate” for the designing of characters. Similarly to what happened with Auri’s mindset not being normalized, the alternate embodiments that are present here are subject to the storyworld in which they appear, and, although similar in terms of cultural relationships towards them, they are not quite the same as what happens with the readers’ referential world relationship to alternate embodiments. Although tempting, applying the methodology that these narratives use in the referential world poses many inaccuracies, namely suggesting that embodiment works exactly the same in literary fiction than it does in the referential world. In terms of embodiment, thus, the notion of alternate embodiments depends solely on the narrator/group of narrators that have built the storyworld: the reader receives the information that both Bast and Old Holly have an alternate embodiment because the main narrator, the primary source of information for the reader, has already established a background of normativization in which such bodies are outside of the standard. It is essential to consider, then, that narrations are always accounts of a fact (either reliable or not), thus implying that the notion of normativization and its implicatures regarding how the story is told depends on others. Furthermore, even if the reader has not read any of the other narrations from the storyworld, both the narrator of “The Lightning Tree” and the narrator of “How Old Holly Came to Be”, if different, suggest the difference in embodiments by contrasting them to elements to which the reader may feel related (that is, in the case of these two stories, humans)³⁴.

³⁴ While it is true, however, that the connection between embodiments and identity does not translate literally to the referential world, the relationship between bodies and normativity does exist, and the reaction towards what narrators/characters from the storyworld receive as alternate embodiments may be terribly violent, implying that the essential differences between creatures suggest one or another behavior (e.g. All Faeries

Embodiment in the narrations, concerning identity, suggests attitudes towards different beings, both personally and externally, upon which readers require to actively meditate and reflect, especially in the context of early twenty-first century, where transhumanism and the notion of embodiment are growing to challenge previous paradigms, for, as will be suggested in the next episode, are subtle enough to go unnoticed, if not for the many resources that these two short stories use to imply them.

are evil, as Chronicker prejudices), which is applicable to certain hate discourses that are rising in the early twenty-first century, if they have ever grown quiet-er. Studying the relationship between embodiments and identity, and how this appears in mass media, may help understand (and thus dismantle) such speeches.

Chapter 9: Narratology and Alternate Embodiment

The holly grew, and that was good ... The Lady sang a song to holly. Holly listened. Holly bent.

The Lady sang and branch became a walking stick, and that was good (Rothfuss, 2013a: n/p).

Bast touched the trunk with his fingertips and made a slow circuit of the tree. He went deasil, the same direction as the turning sun. The proper way for making. Then he turned and switched hands, making three slow circles widdershins. That turning was against the world. It was the way of breaking. Back and forth he went, as if the tree were a bobbin and he was winding and unwinding. (2015a: 805)

1. Introduction

This last analytical chapter will deal with the notion of embodiment in short literary fiction and its narratological connotations. While the previous chapter focused on the relationship between embodiment and identity, this one will focus on the form that this short literary fiction takes to manifest that relationship. In so doing, this chapter will argue that the two short stories on which this dissertation focused present a series of narratological constructions that can help the reader to build a text that suggests that identity and embodiment are connected.

After this introduction, this chapter will separate in four sections: the first will attempt to establish a connection between narratology and bodies, followed by another section that argues about discursive embodiment. After these two sections, there will be a third in which the formats of both “How Old Holly Came to Be” and “The Lightning Tree” are explored to see the narratological devices that hint towards the connection between narratology and embodiment, followed by some conclusions. Throughout these sections, several examples from the two short stories

will be considered and analyzed to explore the way embodiment is embedded within the narrative.

2. Self-Construal and Embodiment in Short Literary Fiction

Much like what happens with trauma and *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, this section will argue that embodiment affects the way “How Old Holly Came to Be” and “The Lightning Tree” are constructed. This not only happens because of them having alternate embodiments, as stated in the previous chapter, but also because of a series of narratological devices that connect these notions formally.

Several critics have argued the connection between narratology and embodiment. Catherine Emmott, for instance, argues that

our default within-frame inferences can be challenged and ... cross-frame inferences, building on clues presented many pages earlier, can force us to reevaluate characters and scenes. In addition, readers may need to monitor belief frames that they realise from their plot knowledge are unreliable. ... This cognitive aspect of reading is supplemented by stylistic indicators which may make clues more prominent in the mind of a reader or which may signal that a denouement is about to occur. (158)

This argument, which appears throughout the dissertation, needs to be brought back to discuss the notion of normalization in embodiments. It is not only that explicitly this short fiction alters formally its shape, which suggests a concern on embodiment, but also that said alteration provokes a series of inferences regarding the topic that needs to be tackled as well.

While Emmott’s argument may fall into a too universalistic interpretation of reading, her statement can be applied to a storyworld notion in which different narratological devices are used, as she suggests. The inferences that allow the reader to notice clues regarding embodiment are enhanced by the differences in stylistic

approaches in the three sorts of story that appear in this dissertation: similar to Auri's traumatic identity's discourse, the form that "How Old Holly Came to Be" takes, for instance, suggest the alterity of embodiment mentioned above.

In terms of embodiment, normalization works similarly to psychological mindsets. Herman argues that typification, a term that he borrows from Alfred Schutz –term that suggests that epistemological knowledge is necessarily artificial, thus requiring cognitive structures (Herman, 2003: 6)– is complementary to the narrative process, insofar as the latter "fill the breach when [the former] fails" (7). What he is also suggesting is that stories focus on the non-typified elements of that story, the narrativeness of the particular narrative (Morson: 59), that is, what has not been constructed by the narrative voice by the time the narration takes place, what results interesting –out of place– for the narrative act to be relevant.

If so, then most bodies that appear in any given narration can be either considered as appealing due to their particular traits or because of the narration precisely having these bodies not regarded as striking. When the narrative voice of "How Old Holly Came to Be" describes Holly's enemies as "black wolves, with mouths of fire" (Rothfuss, 2013a: n/p) or as "men who had been bent halfway into birds" (n/p), then the narrative is suggesting that, regardless of particular symbolisms or other notions (which may or may not apply to this), such bodies are worth their narrativeness, and should be noted by the audience. In other words, their embodiment's interest does not lie that much in the fact that they were black, that they had fiery mouths, or that they were half-bird, half-man (n/p), as much as they are alternate, and therefore worth mentioning. If "How Old Holly Came to Be" were set in the reader's referential world, their alternativity would be quite obvious (at least for the Western world), but in a fantasy setting where all is potentially possible (as long as it more or less adheres to its conventions), as argued earlier, their alternativity is sharply marked.

The narrative voice of "The Lightning Tree" does not focus on embodiments that would strike as alternate for the reader, insofar as they are, mostly, inhabitants

of Newarre, ordinary townsfolk that adhere to the fantasy tropes mentioned above. In this case, however, what is interesting is that their being marked implies an interest from the main character, which happens to have, as has been suggested, an alternate embodiment, one of the Fae. It is worth noting, for instance, the difference between the description of “Rike’s mother. She was tall, and her curling brown hair was springing loose from the braid that hung down her back ... In the sunlight Bast noticed her high cheekbones and generous mouth. Even so, she was more tired than pretty, her dark eyes heavy with worry” (2015a: 846-847). All these marked traits suggest an interest in them, the reasons for said interest more or less intuitable. These reasons will be more patent the more Nettie and Bast intimate, until the point in which the scene abruptly ends right after, sexually implicitly, “Bast smiled, gentle and patient, his voice was warm and sweet as honey. He held out his hand. ‘Come with me,’ he said. ‘I have something to show you’” (850). Conversely, the narrative voice speaks of Bast using different structures. When he attempts to escape from the Waystone Inn in order not to read *Celum Tinture*, “His face was sweet and sly and wild. He looked like a naughty child who had managed to steal the moon and eat it. His smile was like the last sliver of remaining moon, sharp and white and dangerous” (803). That poses two notions regarding embodiment: first, that the narrative voice marks Bast’s traits insofar as they are continuously associated with particular instances, that is, “his face was sweet and sly and wild” (803) in that specific moment, not always, which is what makes his face marked. In other words, where different characters have traits that are more or less static, Bast is in constant alteration of his embodiment, marking only particular instances in which that embodiment is notably altered. Second, that wording and syntax, much like in the case of Auri and her mindset, present alterity in the way this embodiment is presented to the reader, because of Bast’s alternate embodiment. Within “The Lightning Tree”, almost all of these linguistic remarks (such as the use of metaphors) are used to define Bast from a bodily perspective.

The above results in an example from which a connection between embodiment and identity can be explicitly drawn within the storyworld. Bast’s

embodiment focuses his markedness of other characters' embodiment, interpreting as something essential for them –belonging to them, such as being tall or having long hair (846-847)–, and, at the same time, differentiates him from them through the way the narrative voice speaks about his embodiment: he is different, altered continuously, and he belongs to a different race than most inhabitants of Newarre. Therefore, the way the narrative voice narrates such events is different too. If one understands identity as mentioned above (a discursive tool for individuals to configure themselves within their chronotopic environment), then embodiment is necessarily connected to the way the discourse is built, and not only regarding identity's express content, using, as Awadalla suggests in her study on “Arab Women's Short Fiction” within *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays*, the alternate body “as a means of redefining cultural and physical boundaries” (145): If so, not only his identity would be affected by his embodiment, then, but also his epistemological conceptualization of Temerant.

This same principle can be applied to “How Old Holly Came to Be”: the structure that this short story takes is necessarily affected by Holly's alternate embodiment, insofar as it affects the way Holly's identity is built and the way Holly's epistemological knowledge is acquired. On the other hand, Holly focuses its markedness on the moral aspect of each being existing and/or performing a particular action, that is, focuses on a specific ethical code that is embedded within Holly's embodiment: by being capable of living throughout the ages, Holly's perception of alterities in each being's embodiment is less critical, and instead Holly focuses on what such beings do, and how this creature perceives that action within its own moral code (2013a: n/p). In both short stories then, it could be argued that the focalized characters affect their very form.

Coupland and Gwyn's body project further reinforces this consideration of embodiment as altering the epistemological knowledge of the embodied. Starting from Shilling's definition of such as “an unfinished biological and sociological phenomenon which is changed by its participation in society; styles of walking, talking and gestures are influenced by our upbringing; the body is seen as an entity

which is in the process of becoming; a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual's self-esteem" (11), that Coupland and Gwyn recover for their model (8). Connecting this with embodiment's aforementioned shaping of the identity discourse, as well as with the limits of identitarian discourse within fictional works, readers are then suggested that the relational aspect of the identity discourse between the embodied and the setting within which such an embodied being appears in fiction not only when describing a character, but also when narrative voices focus on the environment that surrounds them. That is, there can be some inferences from characters' embodiment drawn from descriptions from the setting, or rather, from their perception of this setting.

It can be concluded then, that, as Coupland and Gwyn argue, if "the body is a routinely functioning semiotic resource ... [that] have tangible and practical effects on everyday lives in the form of particular outcomes" (9), then the body acts in a dialogic manner, and is both affected and affecting the environment in which such an embodiment appears. This dialogical consideration of the body opens ways in which this embodiment can be explored: not only through what characters state can the reader infer their embodiment, but also from how they conceptualize the world, and, more than that, from how they do not, which readers can acknowledge through similar empathic links than the ones that they use for understanding the notion of trauma in fictional characters, as stated earlier.

Narratologically, it is the narrative voice the most prominent figure from these two short stories, being the only one that says something in "How Old Holly Came to Be". However, in the case of this storyworld, the connection between the narrative voice and the main character of each story seems to be quite strong, as opposed to a more neutral (or rather, plural) narrative voice from, for instance, Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings*. In the case of the narrative voices from Temerant's storyworld, they present differences depending on who the characters are of this story (for instance, the differences between the external narrative voice and the internal narrative voice from the main trilogy that were studied in the first section of this dissertation) that suggest that the third person limited narrative voices from

this storyworld do not only share knowledge with their respective main characters but also that they share how they perceive said knowledge³⁵. Alternatively, it could be argued that these narrative voices merely mimic this connection. Nonetheless, either by mimic or by sharing epistemological perception, most narrative voices usually suggest a connection with a particular character. If so, in these two short stories, the two narrative voices relate their experience to their main characters, that is, Holly and Bast, which suggests the reader that most of the comments that these narrative voices do are connected to the way these two characters perceive the world.

3. Discursive Embodiment

This section will explore how embodiment is discursified. It will explore, therefore, how characters mark or unmark elements depending on their way of perceiving and being perceived, that is, the way their mindset is embodied.

The relationship between short stories and embodiments has been studied before. If we consider, for instance, Leving's work, *Anatomy of a Short Story*, where he compiles a series of studies on Nabokov's short stories, the reader faces an attractive table of contents, where each section is directly associated with a body part –“Heart ... Bone structure ... Vascular System ... Muscles of the Story ... Nervous system” (table of contents)–. While this may not be a particularly analytic clue on the relationship between short stories and embodiment, and instead may be regarded as a literary exercise on academic language, Geoffrey Green, within the book, reinforces this, arguing that in his experimentation, Nabokov considered the idea of allowing the entire novel to serve

as the embodiment (not merely the vehicle for expression) of his affirmative assertions about the power of the imagination. The novel would not only be about

³⁵ For more on third person limited narrative voices, Cf. Genette: 188–89.

artistic creation in relation to the structures of the world, it would itself be an example, a demonstration, of imaginative reordering that yet exists as a structure of the world. (169)

The use of formal devices to imply certain traits, especially embodiment for this chapter, appears as a narratological tool that connects the Short Story's storyworld with the reader's referential world, which allows the critic to consider the terminology that has appeared in the previous chapter as relevant for this analysis. In other words, the short stories are not only presenting the reader with the notion of alternate embodiment within the storyworld but instead are suggesting that "alternate embodiment" is an adequate terminology to be used when studying it because both the storyworld and the Short Story format allows the reader to establish a connection between a referential alternate embodiment and a storyworld's. Thus, by being aware of its structure, the short story leads the reader towards alternate embodiment's narratology by including this notion within the storyworld through its architecture.

The translation of alternate embodiments to discourse is, then, what needs to be studied. In a narration where alternate embodiments use the same language – one of the few tools that a narration has to express difference, as can be seen, for instance, in Hagrid's English in the *Harry Potter* storyworld (Rowling)–, what occurs is a de-normalization of discursive elements, such as, for example, a primarization of poetic over descriptive language that appears in "How Old Holly Came to Be", or the irony that is key for interpreting some of the events from "The Lightning Tree". In other words, where there is a normalized, core discourse structure, present in the main trilogy, both in the internal and in the external narrative voice, the two short stories use a de-normalization of such a discourse structure to suggest the alternate embodiments that the main characters have, similarly to what *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* did for trauma.

Discursive embodiment is a term used by Graham Ley to argue that "Performance theory has contributed to a belief in the actor as the original essence

of theatre-making, but this is inaccurate, since in origin what we have is an astonishing discursive embodiment of pre-existent grand narratives in which characters were embedded” (Abstract). Discursive embodiment, then, refers to the idea of a narrations’ capacity to refer to a particular body without it being necessarily embodied in an actor from the reader’s referential world. In other words, the concept of discursive embodiment would refer to the narrative act of embodying someone within the readers’ multiplicity of texts. This apparently problematic notion –that narrations do imply specific objective (if such a term philosophically exists) embodiments– can be easily bypassed by assuming that the narrations’ power relies not much in suggesting particular embodiments as to indicate the normativity of such bodies: *The Hobbit*, for instance, is unable to make the reader consider non-human races in such and such way (even when describing them) without any textual deviation, although they can suggest that their bodies are, within the storyworld, more normal or abnormal: if a reader takes, for instance, the first description of Gandalf from *The Hobbit*, one may read: “All that the unsuspecting Bilbo saw that morning was an old man with a staff. He had a tall pointed blue hat, a long grey cloak, a silver scarf over which his long white beard hung down below his waist, and immense black boots” (Tolkien, 2001: 24). That is the first instance where the reader meets Gandalf the Grey. It is noticeable that the narrative voice makes notice of the age –“old man” (24)–, his “long white beard” (24) and his apparel, but not his skin color, nor his ear-shape (even when taking into account that the main character –the character who presents the Point of View from which Gandalf is described– has, like all hobbits, pointed ears). Helen Young argues this in *Race and Popular Fantasy Literature: Habits of Whiteness* when she states that

Not only are the Good peoples of Middle-earth marked as White, Faramir’s “Men of Darkness” are distinctly not. Many peoples comprise Sauron’s armies in addition to the non-human trolls and orcs: “Easterlings with axes, and Variags of Kharad, Southrons in scarlet, and out of Far Harad black men like half-trolls with white eyes and red tongues” all come to the Battle of the Pelennor Fields. [(Tolkien, 2007: 107)]. They are effectively undifferentiated under the one –tellingly black– banner

of evil, servants of Sauron, collected together within the single Othering category of non-European, non-White. (23)

In other words, Gandalf is not mentioned to have white skin, and, by contraposition, all creatures that do not have white skin are marked as such – although later in the storyworld, which may produce a textual change for some readers. This serves to illustrate what was suggested earlier: At first sight, what is marked in Gandalf description serves to notice what seems to be abnormal for either the reader and/or the narrative voice, which implies that, in terms of discursive embodiment, most of the times what the reader will find are those characteristics that are abnormal or within a reasonable scope of rarity (most descriptions in any of the short stories that appear here will not start with having a character defined as human, for instance).

Most narrations, then, present the reader with a series of attributes that define their characters by acknowledging marked traits. Similarly, marked narrativities, such as Auri's in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, present alternate mindsets. In "How Old Holly Came to Be", for instance, the narrative voice's way of describing the setting references the changes in embodiment that Holly experiences: from not being a sentient tree to becoming one and from there to being capable of traveling (even when not doing so) marks the way the narration goes, as suggested by the narration's way of addressing Holly. The first time that Holly appears as a self is when "The Lady turned her foot upon a stone, and that was bad. She leaned against his trunk and frowned, and that was bad. The Lady sang a song to holly. *Holly listened. Holly bent.* The Lady sang and branch became a walking stick, and that was good" (Rothfuss, 2013a: n/p, my emphasis). Before that, Holly is always referred to as "the holly", or even just part of the collective noun, "the wood": "In the beginning, there was the wood ... But the holly tree she did not cut. The holly grew and spread its branches in the open space. And that was good" (n/p). This way of individualizing Holly suggests a developing consciousness that stems from Holly's relationship with the Lady.

Similarly, the Lady also starts to be capitalized from the moment after “She sat beneath the holly and she sang” three times (n/p). This markedness suggests that Holly’s consciousness, which is expressed through the narrative voice, finds the Lady’s song as relevant, specifically its singer, as argued earlier. As such, the way that Holly perceives the Lady also affects her embodiment. That is, she at first was a common lady, but the fact that she is capable of singing –a physical trait– makes her the Lady (n/p). Similarly, after Holly listens to the Lady, he becomes capitalized (n/p). Such a development of physical attributions is what makes them unique, abnormal within their general embodiment category, and therefore, capitalized.

The fact that these two literary works are short stories is substantial in terms of embodiment. Much like what was argued for *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, but from a more structural point of view, there is a plausible correlation between narrative structures and character embodiments. That alterity can be seen not only in the fact that these two are the only two short stories that the storyworld has presented, but also that these two short stories are different between them, even referring to two different short story traditions precisely to reinforce the idea of existing a correlation between the narration’s narrativity and the main characters having alternate embodiments.

Chapters (or, at least, the way they are conceived) are an element that separates these two short stories from any other type of narration within the storyworld, and one of the plausible correlations between embodiment and narration. The fact that “How Old Holly Came to Be” has no chapters in its structure (save a brief foreword that might or might not be considered part of the short story, much like in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*’ case), suggests an alterity from what has been seen in other productions, either *The Kingkiller Chronicle*’s main trilogy or *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. However, although the short story does not have chapters, it has 15 lines that separate the approximately 1,670 words in different concepts or scenes.

On the other hand, “The Lightning Tree” has three chapters, each separating times of the day. Their use, thus, is different from Auri’s novella or Kvothe’s novels, insofar as they do not separate concepts nor “strategic points” (Carpenter: n/p). Instead, what is reinforced here is a marked difference from normalized chapter structure within the storyworld, implying a different conceptualization of the events from the narration based on a more naturalized perception of the world, as Fae people usually have, as can be seen, for instance, in Kvothe’s words:

Here is the one thing I learned from these stories: the Fae are not like us. This is endlessly easy to forget, because many of them look as we do ... I have heard people say that men and the Fae are as different as *dogs and wolves*. While this is an easy analogy, it is far from true. ... Our people and theirs are as different as *water and alcohol*. In equal glasses they look the same. Both liquid. Both clear. Both wet, after a fashion. But one will burn, the other will not. This has nothing to do with temperament or timing. These two things behave differently because they are profoundly, fundamentally not the same. The same is true with humans and the Fae. (Rothfuss, 2011a: 654, my emphases)

The two analogies that Kvothe uses to refer to the differences between humans and Fae serve to explore this separation between these two races: for humans, dogs and alcohol, which suggest civilization, whereas water and wolves would imply non-civilized world—as is also implied in “But something that appeals to all the fae are places with connections to the raw, true things that shape the world. Places that are touched with fire and stone. Places that are close to water and air.” (2015a: 817)–. This is further reinforced by having Fae being extremely allergic to iron—as can be seen in “[Felurian] told me I reeked of iron and sent me into the forest telling me not to return until I got the bitter stink of it from my face” (2011a: 676), among other examples–. By separating the narration between “Morning” (2015a: 803), “Afternoon” (827) and “Evening” (853), the narration suggests an alternate mindset, where the aforementioned strategic points are not what is at stake, but the literal positioning of the sun what changes the narrative flow. That suggests another connection with *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, where the narration is focused

on seven days. However, as was previously explored, the way the chapters are present in the novella seems to be more focused on Auri's trauma (or alternate mindset) rather than in her embodiment, since the way these are constructed does not seem to follow any explicit rule. That does not mean, of course, that Auri's embodiment does not affect the way she perceives the world, but the narrative cues the reader to infer that Auri's present embodiment seems to be the result of the traumatic experience and not vice versa. Thus, although chapters fulfill a similar function within both the novella and the short story that has them –even when assuming that Auri's embodiment may have led her towards the unnamed trauma–, the narration seems to cue readers towards different issues upon which they may reflect, either embodiment or mindset. The common ground between both, and even the main trilogy's use of chapters, seems to be alterity and the vertebration of identity throughout narratological devices.

Another narratological device that these two short stories reinforce is personal positioning, a term that, according to Gary Gregg, “refers to how individuals privately organize, evaluate, and *narrate their lives* in a moral framework” (64, my emphasis). This term is essential regarding identity because, as Gregg notes, there is a connection between it and social positioning: “Social positioning rises from societal definitions and prescriptions that bear clown on the person from the outside, shaping their experience *and their stories*. Social positioning will be more marked when there are power differences in social hierarchies or dichotomies” (64, my emphasis). Gregg, thus, notes that the moral framework within which characters live is shaped by the societal norms that configure how they are being perceived. That may be easy to understand in “The Lightning Tree”: Bast lives within a society of which the reader may grasp some more information from the main trilogy, in which Bast's social positioning stems from his alternate embodiment insofar as he is perceived, according to the narration, as something that he is not. Given Kvothe's words, the narration suggests that Fae attempt to normalize their embodiment to hide what they are, which is suggested

throughout the whole short story, as well as the novels. When speaking with Kostrel, Bast states that

“The fae folk look nearly like we do, but not *exactly*. Most have something about them that makes them different. Their eyes. Their ears. The color of their hair or skin. Some times they’re taller than normal, or shorter, or stronger, or more beautiful ... any of the Fae who has the skill to travel here will have craft enough to hide those things ... That is a type of magic all the fair folk share”. (Rothfuss, 2015a: 817, emphasis in the original)

Attempting to normalize their embodiment, however, does change the personal positioning from which these characters construct their narrations, insofar as it changes their social positioning: fae folk are generally not perceived as such, and when they do, their social positioning radically changes: “Chronicler had been staring at Kvothe’s young student, trying to decide what was different about him ... Chronicler’s gaze would be considered intense at the very least, and rude by most. When Bast finally turned from the bar, Chronicler’s eyes widened perceptibly, and the color drained from his already pale face” (2008: 92). The narration, then, is affected by the character’s perception of others’ embodiments, and “The Lightning Tree” suggests to the reader Bast’s awareness on this topic, which, at the same time, modifies how the narrative voice speaks of him.

This perception of alterity by the readers is suggested by the connection between landscape and its inhabitants (as Correia: 10 argues), understanding landscape as “all that can be seen from a certain point; it positions us as observers, at a distance before a view to be observed. It implies ‘separation and observation’ (Williams: 120), a certain way of looking, artistic representation and an effort at detachment” (Correia: 9). If readers are presented with the normality or abnormality of such a body through the different narrative voices, which, at the same time, in “The Lightning Tree” suggests taking (or, at least, knowing) the point of view of Bast, then readers should receive two different perspectives on this alterity, depending on the point of view from which the narrative voice is speaking. If so,

then the social positioning (that is, the world-building factor) may remain the same throughout the whole storyworld by blending characters from one narration to another. As Tucan argues,

readers run blends of identity and shift frames to construct *blended characters*. As they inhabit the blend, characters can ... deliver new insights. The blend of identities simultaneously requires several major mental abilities – activating conflicting stories that emerge in the minds of the characters, blending them together, and finally interpreting the values of the emergent blended story. (Tucan: 53, emphasis in the original)

Thus, each character's social positioning may be the same throughout the storyworld. However, the time in which the reader receives personal positioning from this alterity (Bast) does not appear in the novel, but only in the short story. This is the reason why the narrative voice of "The Lightning Tree" and the narrative voice of *The Name of the Wind* are dissimilar: to have the readers suggested Bast's personal positioning (and thus understanding the way he narrates his life), the narrative voice is implied to know Bast's point of view, which, belonging to the Fae, imply an alterity in his epistemological conceptualization of the world. In other words, while both personal and social positionings have not changed throughout the storyworld, it is only by having Bast's point of view when readers acknowledge that Bast's embodiment is not only just altered, but that said alterity is crucial for his identity and his identity discourse, given his positioning. It is not only that his conceptualization is different, but that this conceptualization causes variations in his identity discourse.

While this may be seen as subversive or not, giving voice to alternative identity discourses raises awareness on the factors that provoke that alterity in society, but the question that arises now is how this affects readers' reception of "How Old Holly Came to Be". Arguing as we have done before that Old Holly's societal positioning alters its personal positioning is to say that Old Holly's moral (and life) codifications are configured by how Old Holly perceives and is perceived

by the society in which he lives. Yet, as mentioned above, Old Holly lives within, at best, a primitive society consisting in no more than six or seven characters, unless the reader takes that Old Holly lives in a society where most individuals are not suggested to the reader while appearing narrated. In other words, what seems to be suggested is that Old Holly is aware of his belonging to his own chronotope, which Holly regards as his (primitive) society from which he learned its moral code.

Another difference between the two short stories, and between them and other narrative constructions from the storyworld, is the tone that these two narrations use: where “The Lightning Tree” uses a more normalized tone, similar to the one that can be found in the extradiegetic narrative voice from *The Name of the Wind* and *The Wise Man’s Fear*, “How Old Holly Came to Be” presents a narrative voice that reminisces one from creational myths, as has been expressed earlier. This requires further review: if, as Greenblatt suggests, “Tone, the attitude toward a subject conveyed in a literary work, results from a variety of stylistic devices ... some of the most obvious of those devices are diction and detail” (10-11), and this tone can be crucial in understanding embodiments –insofar as they reflect on their normalization–, both diction and detail should be acknowledged when analyzing these two literary works. These two, diction and detail, go hand in hand, since the former refers to the “appropriateness, specificity, and imagery” (Trimmer: 1) that a character includes when speaking, and the latter refers to the level of description of marked elements within a narration, that is, the number of marked factors within the narration (Cartwright: 7). However, a detailed narrative voice is not necessarily a less-concise narrative voice, but that the narrative voice marks more or less elements from the same object of study: when the narrative voice of “How Old Holly Came to Be” specifies the moral definition of each act within one of the five moral categories mentioned above, the detail that the narration includes is no less than Auri’s conceptualization of Fulcrum, nor Bast’s definition of the shepherdess on which he preys.

Comparing the tone between “How Old Holly Came to Be” and “The Lightning Tree”, it is possible to acknowledge specific differences. The conciseness

with which Holly tells his whole story, from his origins to *The Kingkiller Chronicle*'s times can be easily contrasted with Bast's vast narration of a single day. Nevertheless, in terms of detail, the difference relies on the marked elements, rather than in its preciseness. Where Holly sees things from a moral perspective to their core, even to the point of being capable of acknowledging something as "neither [good or bad]" (Rothfuss, 2013a: n/p), "nothing" (n/p), or "both" (n/p), Bast finds difficult to specify his own moral dilemmas: "They constantly conflicted with each other. He felt endlessly turned against himself. Nothing was simple anymore, he was pulled so many ways" (2015a: 819). With that, Bast is suggesting his incapability of pointing out what is marked in said conflict, and instead only indicates his inability to do so.

On the other hand, Bast has no problem when defining those that surround him, either male or female, with apparent precision. The shepherdess, for instance, is described as showing "the lovely line of her neck from her perfect shell-like ear, down to the gentle swell of breast that showed above her bodice" (811), against the conciseness with which Holly describes (if so) other characters. The only thing the reader can explicitly acknowledge from the Lady's physical appearance, for instance, is that she "was neither warm nor cold" (n/p), that she has, at least, one foot (n/p), one thumb (n/p), one hand (n/p), and one head (n/p), much more than what the reader can acknowledge from the man's appearance, which is nothing. With this, the reader is suggested that Holly's markedness comes not from other embodiments, but the moral quality of such, implying a more spiritual interpretation of epistemological knowledge, whereas Bast's point of view is, as is his embodiment, similar to the ones from the main trilogy: a more bodily-focused perception of the world. As such, embodiment plays a significant role, the narration suggests, in the way the storyworld is conveyed.

Another element in which embodiment alterity may be seen is in the two ways of conveying the relationship between characters and the setting (and therefore, constructing themselves) that are implied in these two short stories, which

respond, as Pasupathi defines them, to the reflective mode and the dramatic mode. For her,

Reflective stories provided no sense that the speaker was reliving or reenacting the experience being shared. Rather, speakers are conveying what happened and what it meant to them while being very much in the present moment. Dramatic modes, in contrast, involved many quotations and dramatic devices, nonverbal expressions of emotion, and a sense of reenactment or being transported in time. (133)

Applying these two methods to the short stories, Bast's way of conveying and constructing himself would be similar to the dramatic mode, whereas Holly's responds better to the reflective mode. If embodiment affects narrativity, as has been previously argued, then applying these categorizations to the way they construct their stories imply a correlation between method and embodiment, that is, when comparing the narrative voices from this storyworld, there is a correlation between normalized elements: normalized embodiment (or the more normalized an embodiment is), normalized mindset (or similar mindset), and, consequently, normalized narrative discourse. If so, the reader is suggested to reflect upon the normalization and abnormalization not only of external elements but also of the narrative voices that tell each character's story. While there are several similitudes between the narrative voice of the main trilogy and the one from "The Lightning Tree" (auto-corrections, emphasizing through italics, stylistic approaches to descriptions, using the same rhetoric figures), in terms of normalization, such elements are not similar. It would be abnormal, for instance, in the main trilogy, to have a description of Brann, the youngest son of Newarre's baker in which Kvothe said that "He *smelled* of sweat and fresh bread and ... *something else. Something out of place*" (2015a: 805, my emphases). Instead, by having Bast as the focalized character, the narration focuses on Bast's abnormality regarding the storyworld, that is, he, like the rest of the Fae, is capable of smelling other characters in a much more detailed way than a human's –as is suggested in the episode where Felurian asks Kvothe to get rid of his metallic scent after the latter had shaved (2011a: 676)–, and thus suggests a different embodiment than the one from the main trilogy, the

novella or even the one from “How Old Holly Came to Be”. On the other hand, the meditative method of “How Old Holly Came to Be” suggests that the narrative voice acknowledges that the narration is more of a recollection of memories rather than anything else. This is further reinforced when, at the end of the short story, Old Holly “stayed” (2013a: n/p) six times. By having Old Holly repeating that it stayed, the narration is suggesting that that act, as Pasupathi argued, is affecting it in the present times, since, instead of following a chronological pattern in which Old Holly stays, moves, then stays back and so on while the rest of its world disappear around it (n/p), Old Holly breaks with chronology in that particular moment in order to imply his staying there.

4. Conclusions

This chapter has explored the connection between narratological devices and embodiment. As such, embodiment has been suggested as key in understanding how the narration is conceived. Furthermore, by connecting mindset and embodiment using narratology, readers are suggested that both the former and the latter manifest not only internally, but also externally, by having different characters react towards the focalized characters.

The question arises, however, when asking to what extent these short stories suggest alternate embodiments through their narrative structure and to what extent they convey alterity of mindset if such a difference can be stated in narratological products. It could be argued that these narrations are suggesting alternate mindsets rather than alternate embodiments. Likewise, it could be noted that *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* not only presents alterity in the main character’s mindset but also in her embodiment. Insofar as they relate to identity and identity is constructed from embodiment and mindset (body and mind, if the analogy is illustrative), both narrative structures and content (that is, the “body and mind” of the narratives) are representative of only one thing that can only be separated in two

for analytical purposes. That way, what the reader may perceive is a discourse on the identity of characters (including, especially, the narrative voice) that includes a manifestation of their embodiment through narrative techniques as well as an expression of their internal mindset, as has been argued throughout the dissertation.

That is not exclusive of the novella and the two short stories. By being aware of them, that is, by marking them, the storyworld is also showing the normalized mindset/embodiment discourse (that is, the trilogy). In terms of content and structure, Kvothe's story is also present, and by offering marked narrative devices, the unmarked narrative devices are also brought to light: it is not that "The Lightning Tree" is implying a particular embodiment, but that the narrative methods within the storyworld, their detail, the way their diction is conveyed, are suggested to the reader by marking a particular embodiment.

In short, what this chapter has aimed to do is to suggest that embodiment not only affects the identitarian discourse, but also affects how the narrative voice shapes the narration, and, in so doing, marks its embodiment to the reader, cueing towards an understanding of the story in which embodiment is crucial. The difference between these two short stories and between them and the rest of the narrations from the storyworld points towards this: the many different narrative voices that appear within the storyworld change their way of telling the story depending on the focalized character, suggesting to the reader that they talk from that character's perspective. In so doing, the narrative voice gets embodied within each character, and thus marks or unmarks different elements within the narrative. Readers, through the narrative voices of "How Old Holly Came to Be" and "The Lightning Tree" are suggested that alternate embodiments imply alternate epistemological knowledge grasping.

Conclusions

It was night again. The Waystone Inn lay in silence, and it was a silence of three parts. (Rothfuss, 2008: 1)

After discussing the complete corpus of fantasy stories set in Rothfuss' storyworld, Temerant, published until June 2021 set by set, several conclusions can be stated in attempting to clarify what this dissertation has argued. This dissertation has researched the processes through which characters within Temerant build their identity, as well as the implications of such processes in interpreting the narratives that appear here. Thus, it has primarily drawn attention to defining them and understanding the way these narratives show them. The dissertation, then, applies a variety of theories from several entwined disciplines and research fields to defend that these narrations should be understood through the symbiotic relationship between them and the identity-building processes.

This dissertation uses three different keys that argue for the analysis of the literary works at hand: First, identity is a discourse; second, identity is affected by mindsets (both of the receiver and the narrative voice); and, third, identity is influenced by embodiment. The first key appeared in the first section, which mainly focuses on the two published novels from *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. The second key emerged in the second section, which primarily delves into the novella, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*. Finally, the third key appeared in the third section, which explores the two short stories, "The Lightning Tree" and "How Old Holly Came to Be". All these three keys allowed an exploration of the storyworld in which identity appears as central.

Key one: Discursive Identity

After defining high dark fantasy, a sub-genre of fantasy featuring a setting and characters that challenges previous taxonomies of fantasy, it can be concluded that the core novels are the ones that rely the most on it, presenting characters with complex moral issues, in an almost-medieval setting (save the University) that draws from Celtic and Nordic tradition, as argued in the first chapter. This mostly affects the setting, the world-building processes through which the narration develops the narrative storyworld, and thus affects the framework within which the story appears. As such, and given the features the novels offer, these present the most prototypical example of high dark fantasy, since novels are among the most prone literary productions to delve into world-building for fantasy, as has been studied before.

Earlier it was argued that the narrations from the storyworld help creating distance between the reader's referential world and Temerant, producing a framework without which referential world's contexts would taint the exploration of the connection between narratology and identity. Thus, after separating readers from each narration in terms of epistemological knowledge, the novels hint readers towards exploring the narrative discourses that they produce in terms of reliability, validity, and, most importantly, identity. In other words, thanks to the narration being set in an alternate world, readers are less capable of understanding whether an event was true or false. Instead, they focus on the way such events are conveyed, understanding what could be potentially valid or invalid for their reading, thus suggesting that the way identitarian discourses are built responds to a dialogue between subjects and the chronotope where they belong, between subjects and other subjects, and between subjects and themselves. Making special remarks on differences between social identity and personal identity, and between personal identity and cognitive identity, *The Kingkiller Chronicle* stresses the exploration that it does on how identity discourses are built, which allows researchers to dissect them and separate them for further studies.

Moreover, the novels allow for further, specific research on identitarian discourses insofar as they present themselves as some sort of autobiographical account from a series of events that focus and revolve around a single subject. In other words, the chronicle aims to tell the story of Kvothe, to understand him, while the world that surrounds him merely works as a background within which characters live and interact (and, sometimes, provides counterpoints to Kvothe's story). As such, the novels imply a deep concern on how individuals create a discourse through narrating themselves to others and themselves: readers are cued to infer that subjects are capable of manipulating their identity discourse, that is, the perception other subjects have about themselves through carefully selecting determined events to be told while hiding some others from others. At the same time, however, the narration argues as well that changing the perception that subjects have about themselves seems to be a bit harder. That is, what the novels illustrate is that narrative voices are capable of constructing and deconstructing identity discourses, both from individuals towards others and from individuals towards themselves.

Key two: Mindset

The above connects with *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* and the two short stories, "The Lightning Tree" and "How Old Holly Came to Be", insofar as they suggest readers an imitation of two issues that are also key in understanding identity discourses as a whole: mindset and embodiment. In terms of mindset, this dissertation has argued that the storyworld, especially in *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, is concerned with how characters perform their identity, showing their inner world and suggesting that narrative voices deeply connect with the main characters of each narrative. To justify such concern, first, it was required to argue that high dark fantasy novellas are feasible, given the traits that define both the setting and the novella, and second, that these are narrative constructs that mostly focus on narratological issues and character development.

This argument connects to arguing that narratology and identity are linked through discourse. Thus, what *The Slow Regard of Silent Things* implies –and therefore the rest of the storyworld utilizing normalization and change of perspectives– is that identity discourses may change their shape depending on each person’s mindset, that is, that identity discourses and their configuration are not necessarily universal. Instead, narrative discourses are affected by elements such as trauma, which break the normalized identity discourse structure, or alternate mindsets. In other words, while the storyworld suggests that there is a connection between narratology and identity (that is, between the way stories are told and the way individuals construct themselves), there are multiple ways to do so, and not all discourses have a similar shape: readers, the narration implies, only need to understand that Auri’s identity discourse is there, and is as valid as Kvothe’s, even when constructed synchronically.

Trauma, as defined earlier, then, serves as an exploration of these alternate mindsets that produce alternate identity discourses: by having characters that are traumatized, readers can see how identity discourses may take different ways even when sharing similarities. It is not that one character’s trauma is more significant than the one of another character: trauma quality, if assessable, is not what is argued here, but rather the different ways of constructing identity, even after traumatic experiences. As the storyworld implies, all are valid, regardless of the traumatic event that any character has experienced. For instance, although it may be argued that Kvothe is much more prominent in the storyworld than Auri (in terms of world-shaping), that is because of Auri’s identity discourse that suggests that she prefers to be silent, where Kvothe prefers to take on action and avenge his parents³⁶.

The connection between trauma and narrativity has also been explored in the second section of the dissertation, suggesting that, to acknowledge characters as traumatized, readers must establish an empathic link between them and

³⁶ This, quite probably, connects with what has been stated earlier about the narration being set in a highly patriarchal setting.

characters, since the difficulty of expressing trauma in words requires readers to infer trauma as such based on the clues that narrations give them. This, of course, implies that readers are the ones that oversee how a narration is understood, and the notion of tendency as noted here can be used: the more readers that follow characters in a precise manner, the more successful the tendency of reading them as such, thus implying the more chronotopic impact such interpretation will have.

Key three: Embodiment

Embodiment is the last key to understand how identity appears in *Temerant*. In the third section, after arguing that both short stories present a different relationship to high dark fantasy, this dissertation argued that Bast and Holly's being Non-humans is one of the reasons why their narrations are written as a short story, as they present enough embodiment differences from other main characters to imply a needed change in the way their stories are formatted. Embodiment, thus, not only affects characters in their relationship with their chronotope (that is, their social identity) but also in the way they construct their personal identity. It is essential to note this in a high dark fantasy setting since there are non-human characters that can present embodiment alterity. That suggests more patently the way embodiment affects identity discourses. Under that first layer, however, there is also another layer of embodiment exploration, which takes into consideration identity in human characters, either from alternate world fiction or from other genres.

In that sense, narrative voices can be regarded as part of this embodiment. Old Holly's narrative voice, as has been previously seen, judges events that surround it with precepts from within the storyworld, which implies that the narrative voice is part of the world in which the story takes place. If in "How Old Holly Came to Be" there are only six characters, and neither stays with Old Holly at the end, it can be thought that the narrative voice is indeed Old Holly expressing itself differently from what a more normative embodiment would (much like Auri),

as the novels' narrative voices suggest. This can be seen as well in Bast's short story: if throughout the storyworld narrative voices have been limited to what the main characters know and do, be it Kvothe, Auri, or Holly, and the narrative perspective seems to be of internal focalization (Genette), as has been seen throughout all the examples stated in this dissertation, such as Bast's animalization of other characters, or chapter structure, it can be concluded that Bast's narrative voice is, in fact, his way of expressing the short story. As such, the third person narrative voices within these two short stories are not, in fact, external to the action, but the same characters speaking about themselves using the third person, as a formal resource that indicates alterity in their embodiment.

That should not imply that Bast and Holly do not have a mindset of their own that is worth exploring either, but rather that the short stories suggest a focus on the alterity of their embodiment. It would not be accurate to say that Holly's mindset appears as normalized throughout the storyworld, nor that Bast's mindset appears as a human one, as argued before. Instead, what is being suggested here is that the focus that both short stories have on embodiment alterity hints mindset alterity as well, thus implying a holistic conceptualization of identity discourses. Likewise, it is not that Kvothe's identity discourse is not affected by his mindset, nor that his embodiment is innocuous when regarding him as a character, but instead that the narrative suggests an almost total normalization of his embodiment and his mindset that makes the novels focus on the way said identity is conveyed. At the same time, it is not that Auri's embodiment does not affect her mindset, but instead that the novella focuses on the way that mindset works.

Opening the "Thrice-locked Chest"

Embodiment, thus, as well as mindset and the setting where narratives take place, affect how identity discourses are built within the storyworld. When understanding these three factors, identity discourses may become easier to grasp,

and therefore as well to be constructed in this way. That may have some implications particularly relevant to acknowledge in literature, where all these elements are explicitly (or implicitly) stated in words (or the absence of them). In our referential world, where identity discourses are not only fixed within pages but also include other sources of knowledge as well, these, and how mindsets and embodiments affect them, can be trickier to understand.

However, the need for an empathic link to understand literary identity discourses and referential world's identity discourses is an element that both share. Empathic links that serve to connect readers and characters are needed to acknowledge elements that are not said but are there, such as Auri's trauma, or how Kvothe deals with the loss of his parents and his whole troupe, as well as the understanding of Kvothe's motivations to avenge his entire family, as stated earlier. It may be crucial as well to understand why the narration of *The Wise Man's Fear* takes a darker turn when murdering the fake troupers, although never fully expressed. Regardless of how readers understand such events, an empathic link between them and characters is needed to acknowledge understated factors.

All in all, this dissertation has aimed to suggest a reading of this storyworld where identity, including how identity discourses are built, is at the core. While conveying a high dark fantasy story, the narration also brings readers to engage in a debate where a narratological approach towards identity is not only relevant but seems almost necessary. By doing so, readers are suggested to reflect on how fantasy works as a tool of metanarrative and identitarian exploration. The core of what this storyworld's literary works suggest is, essentially, that their stories convey and explore these processes explicitly, integrating them within the narration, and thus cueing readers towards an understanding of narrativity in which identity is critical: it is not only that identity is narration, as Zima pointed out (1-10), but also that narration is affected by identity.

While this is potentially interesting not only for literary studies but also for social sciences, it should be acknowledged that certain issues would require further

research. The universalistic approach that cognitive narratology does regarding semiotics, as well as many considerations regarding identity that have been explored here, may or may not apply to all readers. In this dissertation, the notion of tendency has been used as a plausible organizational tool for the observable knowledge that has been collected, including testimonials about the storyworld that can be gathered from several websites, such as Reddit, YouTube, or other Digital Platform Research communities, as well as understatement that can be drawn from genre-related issues. As such, there is not one single interpretation of the stories at hand, and therefore extreme precaution should be taken if a possible translation from literature to our referential world is made. Moreover, readers should acknowledge the limitations of literary works in terms of communication: even with illustrations, narrations make explicit discourses that would be otherwise communicated through body language or other means, thus suggesting that not all that has been explored here can apply to readers' referential world. Instead, it could be understood just as one part of narratological communication.

Kvothe's story, Auri's story, and Bast and Holly's stories, can be seen as examples of the identitarian issues that pervade narrations set in Temerant. Further research on the topic could include, for instance, exploring the idea of identity as a narrative in other literary works, or other media. The translation of, for example, embodiment, as examined here, to video-game theory could include, potentially, analysis of sprites and reactions towards them, normalization of such embodiments within different storyworlds, and responses from players to them, especially in video-games based in alternate worlds. Another possibility would be the analysis of film adaptations of literary works, where directors and producers have included their view and their interpretation of a character's embodiment.

It would be also interesting to analyze specifically the visual artwork that surrounds the storyworld, such as, for instance, exploring the contrast between illustrations of *The Name of the Wind*'s tenth-anniversary edition and the ones from *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, not only from a narratological perspective but also the formal aspects on configuring each of them. While this dissertation has not

investigated too much about them, illustrations may be yet another source of fantasy, identity, and narratological exploration.

This dissertation will be significantly enriched once the final book of *The Kingkiller Chronicle* is published. As such, once the book can be read and analyzed, the whole research will be revised after the light that *The Doors of Stone* will shed, providing thus the information regarding closure in finished literary works, and potentially offering new events within the narration into which readers can delve under the scope this dissertation provided. Furthermore, the fact that the tenth-year edition of *The Name of the Wind* includes pictures (intuiting a tenth-year edition of *The Wise Man's Fear* as well), and the upcoming cultural productions that will be set in Temerant will prove invaluable for a new understanding of this storyworld as a whole.

The Kingkiller Chronicle, *The Slow Regard of Silent Things*, “The Lightning Tree”, and “How Old Holly Came to Be” argue that identities can be regarded as narrations and that other narrations can be affected by the identity-building elements researched here. This dissertation has opened the “thrice-locked chest”; delving on its contents is the task of each reader.

Conclusiones

Volvía a ser de noche. En la posada Roca de Guía reinaba el silencio, un silencio triple. (Rothfuss, 2014c: 1)

Después de haber analizado en profundidad todo el corpus de historias de fantasía publicadas hasta junio de 2021 ambientadas en Temerant, es posible extraer ciertas conclusiones acerca de los conceptos que se han investigado aquí, con el fin de sintetizar lo que esta Tesis doctoral ha intentado aportar sobre una tipología literaria reciente y fronteriza desde el punto de vista genérico que requiere nuevas aproximaciones teóricas capaces de ofrecer las respuestas para las que los abordajes tradicionales son insuficientes. Como punto de partida, es importante recordar que esta Tesis se ha centrado especialmente en los procesos que los personajes de Temerant emplean para construir su identidad, así como en lo que implican dichos procesos a la hora de interpretar sus narrativas. Por tanto, lo primero que se ha hecho ha sido definirlos y proporcionar los instrumentos teóricos requeridos para su comprensión, y también identificar y entender la manera en la que aparecen en la narrativa. Este trabajo, por tanto, ha usado una gran variedad de teorías de múltiples campos y disciplinas interrelacionadas para defender que estas narraciones deben ser entendidas a raíz de la relación simbiótica entre estas y los procesos de construcción de la identidad aquí presentados.

Esta Tesis doctoral ha propuesto la utilización de tres llaves metafóricas diferentes –en alusión a las que abren el «Arcón tricerrado» de Kvothe– que orientan el análisis de las obras literarias pertenecientes al corpus: primero, la identidad es discursivizable; segundo, la identidad está condicionada por la mentalidad de los personajes (tanto de la persona receptora como de la voz narrativa); y, por último, a la identidad le afecta el *embodiment* de los personajes. La primera llave se analiza en la primera sección, cuyo foco principal son las dos novelas que hay (por ahora) publicadas de la *Crónica del asesino de reyes*. La

segunda llave orienta la segunda sección, que se centra principalmente en la novela corta, *La música del silencio*. Por último, la tercera llave se estudia en la tercera sección, que disecciona los dos relatos breves, “El árbol del relámpago” y “Cómo el viejo acebo vino a mí”. Estas tres llaves han permitido que, en el *storyworld*, pueda considerarse la identidad y sus procesos como algo nuclear.

Llave uno: Identidad discursiva

Después de proponer una definición de lo que se puede denominar ‘alta fantasía oscura’, un subgénero dentro de la fantasía que presenta un mundo y unos personajes que ponen en cuestión taxonomías más asentadas, se puede concluir que, de todos los productos del *storyworld*, las novelas son las que más se apoyan en dicha definición para construirse, ya que presentan personajes con dilemas morales complejos en un marco cuasi-medieval (a excepción de la Universidad) que se nutre de las tradiciones celta y nórdica, tal y como se demostró en los primeros capítulos de esta Tesis. Como ya se ha indicado, esto afecta sobre todo al marco narratológico, a los procesos de construcción de mundos a través de los cuales la narración desarrolla el *storyworld* narrativo, y por tanto afecta a la ambientación en la que esta historia aparece. Por ello, y dadas las características inmanentes al género novela, estas pueden considerarse el ejemplo más prototípico de alta fantasía oscura, dado que las novelas son los productos literarios más afines a desarrollar la construcción de mundos de fantasía, como ya se ha explicado anteriormente.

Ya se ha argumentado hasta qué punto las narraciones crean distancia entre el mundo referencial de la lectora y Temerant, al producir un marco sin el cual las posibles referencias a contextos del mundo referencial podrían contaminar la exploración de la conexión entre narratología e identidad. Por tanto, tras separar a las lectoras de las narraciones en relación con su conocimiento epistemológico, las novelas incitan a las lectoras a explorar los discursos narrativos que las primeras producen en lo que respecta a su veracidad, validez, y lo que es más importante,

identidad. En otras palabras: debido a que la narración está ubicada en un mundo alternativo, las lectoras son menos capaces de percibir o juzgar un acontecimiento como verdadero o como falso y, por tanto, pueden centrarse en la manera en la que dichos acontecimientos se reproducen en la obra, para así entender qué resulta potencialmente válido o inválido para su lectura. Así, esta Tesis propone que la forma en la que los discursos identitarios se construyen responde a un diálogo entre los sujetos y el cronotopo al que pertenecen, entre los sujetos y otros sujetos y entre los sujetos y ellos mismos. La *Crónica del asesino de reyes* hace especial hincapié en las diferencias entre la identidad social y la identidad personal, así como entre la identidad personal y la identidad cognitiva, lo que provoca que esta enfatice la exploración sobre los discursos identitarios y cómo se han construido los que en ella misma aparecen; todo ello servirá para permitir a la comunidad investigadora diseccionar y separar estos discursos en futuros estudios.

Además, las novelas también dan pie a reflexionar de manera específica sobre los discursos identitarios al mostrarse como una suerte de testimonio autobiográfico de sucesos que se centran, de una manera o de otra, en un único personaje. Dicho de otro modo: el objetivo de la crónica parece ser contar la historia de Kvothe para entenderlo de una manera profunda, mientras que el mundo que le rodea sirve simplemente como un fondo en el cual los personajes viven e interactúan (y, en ocasiones, ofrecen contrapuntos a la historia de Kvothe). Por tanto, las novelas posibilitan una reflexión honda acerca de cómo los individuos crean un discurso a través de la autonarración hacia ellos mismos, así como hacia otros individuos. De este modo, se incita a las lectoras a inferir que los sujetos son capaces de manipular su discurso identitario, esto es, la percepción que otros tienen acerca de ellos, a través de la selección de determinados sucesos y la ocultación de otros. De la misma manera, sin embargo, la narración parece sugerir que cambiar la percepción que un personaje tiene sobre sí mismo resulta ligeramente más difícil. Lo que las novelas de Rothfuss exponen, por tanto, es que las voces narrativas son capaces de construir y deconstruir discursos identitarios, tanto de individuos al respecto de otros individuos como de individuos al respecto de sí mismos.

Llave dos: Mentalidad

Lo expuesto hasta aquí puede aplicarse también a *La música del silencio* y las dos historias cortas, “El árbol del relámpago” y “Cómo el viejo acebo vino a mí”, que han sido objeto de estudio en esta Tesis doctoral, en tanto que evocan a las lectoras una imitación de dos elementos que también son claves a la hora de entender el discurso identitario como un conjunto: mentalidad y *embodiment*. En relación a la mentalidad, esta investigación ha argumentado que, especialmente en *La música del silencio*, este *storyworld* hace especial hincapié en cómo los personajes representan su identidad a través de la presentación de su mundo interno, así como de la utilización de las voces narrativas de manera que parezcan estar profundamente conectadas con los personajes principales de cada narrativa. Para justificar dicho énfasis, primero era necesario argumentar tanto que es posible la existencia de novelas cortas dentro del subgénero propuesto de la alta fantasía oscura, dadas las características que definen tanto el marco como el formato, como que estas son constructos narrativos que se centran principalmente en cuestiones narratológicas y desarrollo de personajes.

Asimismo, este razonamiento entronca con la argumentación sostenida a lo largo de esta Tesis, según la cual narratología e identidad están conectadas a través del discurso. Lo que ofrece *La música del silencio* –y por tanto el resto del *storyworld* a través de la normalización y variación de perspectivas– es que los discursos identitarios pueden cambiar su forma según la mentalidad de cada persona. Esto es, que los discursos identitarios y su configuración no son necesariamente universales. Por el contrario, a los discursos narrativos les afectan elementos tales como el trauma, que rompe la estructura normalizada del discurso identitario, o las mentalidades alternativas. En otras palabras, aunque el *storyworld* parece indicar que hay un vínculo estrecho entre narratología e identidad (es decir, entre la manera en la que las historias se cuentan y la manera en la que los individuos se construyen), es necesario anotar que existen múltiples modos de establecer dicha

conexión, y que no todos los discursos tienen la misma forma: la lectora solo necesita saber que el discurso identitario de Auri se manifiesta en la obra, y es tan válido como el de Kvothe, incluso aunque se construya de manera sincrónica.

El trauma, como se ha justificado a lo largo de esta Tesis, sirve, por tanto, como un mecanismo de exploración de estas mentalidades alternativas que producen discursos identitarios alternativos: puesto que se presentan personajes, las lectoras son capaces de ver cómo los discursos identitarios pueden adoptar formas diferentes incluso aunque compartan similitudes. No se trata de calibrar que un personaje esté más traumatizado que otro: la ‘calidad’ del trauma, si es que esta existe, no es lo que aquí se defiende; por el contrario, esta Tesis se centra en exponer los distintos mecanismos utilizados para la construcción de la identidad incluso después de una experiencia traumática, y que todos son válidos de acuerdo con el *storyworld*. Aunque es plausible pensar que Kvothe es mucho más prominente en el *storyworld* que Auri (en tanto que su capacidad para alterar el mundo es mayor), eso es debido a que el discurso identitario de Auri hace que, mientras que Kvothe opta por actuar, tomar partido y vengar a su familia, ella prefiera mantenerse en silencio³⁷.

La conexión entre trauma y narratividad también ha sido analizada a lo largo de la segunda sección de este trabajo, concluyendo que, para que las lectoras puedan considerar traumatizado a un personaje, estas deben establecer una conexión empática con dicho personaje, dado que la dificultad que tiene el trauma de ser explicado a través de palabras requiere que las lectoras lo infieran a partir de las pistas que la narración ofrece. Esto, por supuesto, implica que las lectoras son las que se encargan de darle significado a una narración, y aquí la noción de tendencia, tal y como se ha definido en esta Tesis, resulta necesaria: cuantas más lectoras comprendan a los personajes de una determinada manera, más sólida y exitosa será

³⁷ Esto, muy probablemente, tenga que ver con lo que se ha mencionado antes de la ambientación en la que la narración se ubica, una ambientación patriarcal.

la tendencia a entenderlos como tal y, por tanto, mayor impacto cronotópico tendrá dicha interpretación.

Llave tres: *Embodiment*

El *embodiment* es la última llave que se propone para entender la manera en la que la identidad se presenta en este *storyworld*. En la tercera sección de esta Tesis, tras defender que la alta fantasía oscura se relaciona de manera distinta con las historias cortas que con otros productos literarios, se ha argumentado que el hecho de que Bast y Acebo sean no-humanos es una de las razones por las que sus narraciones están escritas como historias cortas, dado que presentan suficientes diferencias en su *embodiment* como para requerir un cambio en el formato narrativo que contraste con el de otros personajes principales. El *embodiment*, por tanto, no solo afecta a los personajes en cuestiones relacionadas con su conexión con el cronotopo (esto es, su identidad social), sino también en la manera en la que construyen su identidad personal. Es esencial indicar esto en marcos de alta fantasía oscura, dado que hay personajes no-humanos que pueden presentar alteraciones en su *embodiment*. Esto indica de manera más patente la forma en la que el *embodiment* afecta a los discursos identitarios. Bajo esta primera capa, sin embargo, hay otra capa de exploración, que tiene como principal objetivo la identidad de personajes humanos, ya sean pertenecientes a ficciones de mundos alternativos o a otros géneros.

En este sentido, las voces narrativas se pueden entender dentro de dicho *embodiment*. La voz narrativa de Acebo, como se ha visto antes, juzga acontecimientos que ocurren a su alrededor con preceptos que aparecen como parte del *storyworld*, lo cual implica que dicha voz narrativa forma parte del mundo en el que la trama se desarrolla. Si en “Cómo el viejo acebo vino a mí” solo hay seis personajes y ninguno se queda con Acebo al final de la narración, es razonable pensar que la voz narrativa es el mismo Acebo, expresándose de una forma diferente

(como pasa con Auri) de como lo haría un *embodiment* más normativo, como las voces narrativas de las novelas parecen indicar. Esto también se puede ver en la historia de Bast: si en cada historia del *storyworld* las voces narrativas se han limitado a explicar lo que el personaje principal sabe o lo que hace, ya sea Kvothe, Auri o Acebo, y la perspectiva interna parece la de la focalización interna (Genette), como se ha visto en todos los ejemplos analizados en esta Tesis, tales como (en el caso de Bast) los de animalización de otros personajes o la estructura de los capítulos, se puede concluir que la voz narrativa de Bast es, de hecho, la manera que él tiene de expresar su historia. Por tanto, las voces narrativas en tercera persona de estas dos historias cortas no serían ajenas a la acción, sino que serían las de los propios personajes principales hablando de sí mismos en tercera persona, como un recurso formal que indicaría una alteración de su *embodiment*.

Esto no tiene por qué significar que Bast y Acebo no tienen una mentalidad alternativa que merezca ser explorada además de su *embodiment* alternativo, sino que sus historias cortas sugieren una preocupación extensa con la alteración de su *embodiment*. No sería preciso, como se infiere del análisis realizado, afirmar que la mentalidad de Acebo se normaliza en el *storyworld*, ni que la mentalidad de Bast aparece como si fuera humana. Por el contrario, lo que se propone aquí es que el interés que las historias cortas presentan acerca de su alteridad respecto a su *embodiment* infiere una mentalidad alternativa, lo que por tanto conduce a una conceptualización holística de los discursos identitarios. De la misma manera, no se trata de concluir que el discurso identitario de Kvothe no esté afectado por su mentalidad, ni que su *embodiment* sea inocuo en relación con su conceptualización como personaje, sino que la casi total normalización de su *embodiment* de un lado, y su mentalidad de otro, son lo que hace que las novelas se centren en la manera en la que dicha identidad se verbaliza. Al mismo tiempo, no es que el *embodiment* de Auri no afecte a su mentalidad, sino que la novela corta se centra en la manera en la que dicha mentalidad funciona.

Abriendo el «Arcón Tricerrado»

El *embodiment*, por tanto, junto con la mentalidad y la ambientación en la que las narrativas se ubican, afecta a la manera en la que los discursos identitarios se construyen dentro del *storyworld*. Cuando se comprenden estos tres factores, los discursos identitarios se vuelven más sencillos de entender, y por tanto también resulta más fácil construir nuevos discursos de esta manera. Esto tiene ciertas implicaciones especialmente importantes en literatura, donde estos elementos se manifiestan de manera explícita o implícita en las palabras o en su ausencia. En nuestro mundo referencial, donde los discursos identitarios no están fijados en las páginas, sino que además incluyen otras fuentes de conocimiento, los discursos identitarios y la manera en la que las mentalidades y los *embodiments* los afectan podrían ser más difíciles de entender.

No obstante, existe un elemento que podría considerarse compartido por los discursos identitarios en la literatura y en el mundo referencial: la necesidad de un enlace empático para entenderlos. Los enlaces empáticos, que sirven para conectar a lectoras y personajes, son necesarios para entender aquello que no se dice, pero que está ahí, como el trauma de Auri o la manera en la que Kvothe lidia con la muerte de sus padres y su comparsa, así como para comprender las antes mencionadas motivaciones de Kvothe para vengar a su familia. Podría ser también clave para entender por qué la narración de *El temor de un hombre sabio* se torna más oscura cuando Kvothe asesina a la falsa compañía de Edena Ruh, aunque nunca se exprese de esa manera. Al margen del modo en que las lectoras accedan a dichos eventos, el enlace empático entre lectoras y personajes resulta imprescindible para alcanzar la comprensión de factores implícitos.

Por tanto, esta Tesis ha intentado proponer y argumentar una lectura del *storyworld* en la que la identidad y la manera en la que los discursos identitarios se construyen son temas centrales. Durante la verbalización de una historia de alta fantasía oscura, la narración también lleva a las lectoras a reflexionar acerca de que la aproximación a la identidad de manera narratológica no es solo relevante para el

corpus aquí estudiado, sino casi necesaria. Al hacer esto, también se induce a las lectoras a plantearse cómo la fantasía sirve de herramienta de exploración tanto metanarrativa como identitaria. En lo más profundo de estos trabajos literarios yace, esencialmente, la convicción de que sus historias verbalizan y exploran estos procesos de manera explícita, integrándolos en la narración, y por tanto guiando a las lectoras hacia una comprensión de la narratividad en la que la identidad es la clave: no es solo que la identidad es narración, como apunta Zima (1-10) sino que a la narración le afecta la identidad.

Aunque lo expuesto hasta aquí puede resultar interesante no solo para los estudios literarios, sino también para las ciencias sociales, las posibles limitaciones de esta aproximación indican la pertinencia de más investigaciones al respecto. La forma en la que la narratología cognitiva trata de abarcar universalmente la semiótica, así como ciertas consideraciones relacionadas con la identidad aquí presentadas podrían, o no, ser válidas para todas las lectoras. En esta Tesis, la noción de tendencia se ha usado para organizar de una manera plausible el conocimiento observable que aquí se ha recopilado, incluyendo testimonios acerca del *storyworld* que pueden encontrarse en sitios web tales como Reddit, YouTube, u otras Plataformas de Investigación Digital, además de asunciones previas sobre aspectos relacionados con el género literario aquí tratado. Por tanto, no hay una única interpretación de las historias que aquí se han estudiado, y, por tanto, si esta aproximación se trasladara a otros campos de conocimiento no literarios debería hacerse con cautela. Además, las lectoras deben asumir las limitaciones de un trabajo literario en cuestiones de comunicación: incluso con ilustraciones, las narraciones hacen discursos explícitos que de otra manera se comunicarían a través de lenguaje corporal o a través de otros procesos. Por tanto, merece la pena resaltar de nuevo que no todo lo que aquí se ha sugerido es relevante para el mundo referencial. Al contrario, debería considerarse como solo una parte de la comunicación narratológica.

La historia de Kvothe, la historia de Auri, la historia de Bast y la historia de Acebo pueden verse como ejemplos de elementos identitarios que permean las

narraciones ubicadas en Temerant. Se podría continuar investigando acerca de, por ejemplo, la idea de identidad como narrativa en otros trabajos literarios o en otros productos culturales. La traducción de, por ejemplo, el *embodiment* como aquí está expresado a la teoría del videojuego podría incluir, potencialmente, el análisis de los *sprites* y la reacción de las jugadoras hacia ellos, y la normalización (y reacción) de tales *embodiments* dentro de otros productos culturales, especialmente en videojuegos ambientados en mundos alternativos. Otra posibilidad podría ser la adaptación de trabajos literarios al cine en los que dirección y producción han incluido su visión e interpretación del *embodiment* de los personajes.

También podría resultar de interés explorar en profundidad el arte visual que rodea a estos productos culturales, por ejemplo, analizando el contraste entre las ilustraciones de la edición del décimo aniversario de *El nombre del viento* con las de *La música del silencio*, no solo desde una perspectiva narratológica, sino también los aspectos formales que las configuran. Aunque este proyecto no se ha propuesto profundizar en ellas, no cabe duda de que las ilustraciones podrían ser otra fuente de información para realizar una investigación narratológica, una investigación identitaria o una investigación del género *fantasy*.

Por último, no es difícil prever que los argumentos defendidos a lo largo de esta Tesis se enriquecerán en gran medida una vez el último volumen de *La Crónica del asesino de reyes* se publique. Cuando el libro sea accesible, esta investigación se revisará teniendo en cuenta la luz que *Las Puertas de Piedra* arroje, para explorar el concepto de cierre en obras literarias finalizadas. Además, es muy probable que las lectoras hallen en sus páginas nuevos eventos narrativos que investigar teniendo en cuenta la perspectiva aquí ofrecida. Por último, la producción de la serie de décimo aniversario de *El nombre del viento*, que deja caer una reedición de *El temor de un hombre sabio*, así como las próximas producciones culturales que sean ambientadas en Temerant tendrán un valor incalculable a la hora de comprender este *Storyworld* como un conjunto.

La Crónica del asesino de reyes, La música del silencio, “El árbol del relámpago” y “Cómo el viejo acebo vino a mí” sugieren la noción de identidad como producto narrativo y, además, la idea de que otras narraciones se pueden ver afectadas por los tres elementos identitarios discutidos en esta Tesis doctoral: discurso, mentalidad y *embodiment*. El «Arcón tricerrado» (Rothfuss, 2011b: 576) ha sido abierto, pero explorar lo que hay en su interior es tarea de cada lectora.

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