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The Female Hero: An Analysis of Female Protagonists in Modern Epic High Fantasy Novels

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Fantasy Novels

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The Female Hero: An Analysis of Female Protagonists in
Modern Epic High Fantasy Novels

A Research Paper

Presented to the

Faculty of the Library Science Department

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Donald L. Osterhaus

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ABSTRACT

The role of the modern epic high fantasy hero was defined as having the following seven traits among its essential elements: autonomy, resourcefulness, dignity, self reliance, inspiration, physical ability, self knowledge. Thirteen female heroes from modern epic high fantasy novels were analyzed as to what degree they displayed those traits. Data confirmed the hypothesis that women cast in the role of hero in this type of novel display the same traits that men do. A second hypothesis, that the female heroes would tend to be single and then marry at the end of the novel was supported by data, as was a third hypothesis, proposing that the majority of societies portrayed in the novels would be traditional patriarchal societies.

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Chapter I

Introduction

"Sexual definition is the obligation and pastime
of all cultures." (Mills, 1974, p. 11)

Literature is an important tool in sexual
definition. It reflects society and values. It helps
shape and reinforce those values. The culture
reflected in most of Western literature, however, has
been and continues to be intensely patriarchal.
Western culture has been patriarchal so long that,
"Much of what we live by and attribute to nature or
destiny is, in reality, a pervasive cultural mythology"
(Kolbenschlag, 1979, p. xiv).

For the most part, women have not been valued as
writers. Most well known and well respected writers
throughout history have been men. As a result, images
of women in literature are products of a creative
process that has a limited perspective.

> It [literature] tries to focus the larger
> community's reality through the unique point of
> view of the principal character, and through
> the universality of his experience it tries to
> derive a greater understanding of the human
> situation. But the feminine experience is not
> necessarily included in "his experience".
> (Allen, 1986, p. 170)

Most fictional women have been created by men. Of
those who have not been created by men, many have been

created by women whose perspective has been colored by the dominant world view of the patriarchy. "...Women almost never have a chance to see themselves culturally through their own eyes" (Pratt, 1981, p. 169).

Historically, women have been valued in many fewer roles than have men. Those roles that have been valued have often been domestic, and almost always subordinate. Sexual identity and personal worth have come from the patriarchy.

> If authenticity depends on totality of self--the greatest possible exercise of our capacities for significant work, intellectual growth, political action, creativity, emotional development, sexual expression, etc.--then women are supposed to be less than total selves. (Pratt, 1981, p. 6)

Equality of the sexes is not an integral part of our culture. It should be.

The role that literature has played, and continues to play, in suppressing the development of female potential must be recognized.

> When fiction incorporates patriarchal assumptions--assumptions that are demeaning to women solely because of their sex--and when those assumptions are repeated over a long period of time by a great number of highly admired writers, they take on the status of reality in the popular consciousness. (Allen, 1986, p. 181)

In spite of the "popular consciousness," women have made remarkable progress in this century. In the introduction to her Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye,

Madonna Kolbenschlag (1979) conjectures that the women's movement may be the most significant cultural phenomenon of our time (p. xiii). But for all of the progress that has been made, much remains to be done if women and men are to achieve cultural parity. Literature, a powerful tool capable of inventing new models of feminine experience, can and must play an important role in achieving that parity.

This project, then, is a search for "new" women. It is an analysis of a part of contemporary fiction to see if writers of modern epic high fantasy are contributing to the redefinition of the concept of "woman" in the popular consciousness. The primary question considered is: do female heroes in modern epic high fantasy novels exhibit traits comparable to those exhibited by male heroes in the same genre?

Seven "standard" heroic traits have been chosen based on prior research. The traits are autonomy, resourcefulness, dignity, self reliance, leadership, physical fitness, and self knowledge. These traits are consistently exhibited by male heroes in modern epic high fantasy. Because the role and image of the hero are so well defined and so universal, any individual cast in the role should exhibit all of these traits to a high degree--regardless of gender. The first

hypothesis is that fictional women in the role of hero in modern epic high fantasy novels will display to a high degree the same traits as men cast in the same role.

Sub-hypotheses for the first hypothesis are that women cast in the role of hero will display: (a) autonomy and a strong sense of self worth; (b) resourcefulness and the intelligence to resolve difficult situations; (c) a strong sense of personal dignity and recognition of the need to accord that same dignity and respect to others; (d) self reliance and confidence in her ability to deal with problems herself; (e) inspiration--the ability to inspire others to follow her, and the ability to lead with integrity; (f) physical ability developed to a sufficient degree to cope with the physical dangers facing a hero; (g) self knowledge which has been gained through hardship and personal loss.

A second hypothesis is based on data compiled for this analysis. Traditional heroes are usually single as they begin their quests and their adventures often end with a wedding. If female heroes follow in the footsteps of their male counterparts, a majority of them will be single and their adventures will end at the altar.

A third hypothesis states that a majority of the female heroes will not be the products of societies that encourage women to be heroes. A majority of the female heroes will come from traditional patriarchal societies.

Examined works are epic high fantasy novels, published after 1965, that feature a female protagonist. The year 1965 was chosen as a starting point because it is the year that J.R.R. Tolkein's <u>The Lord of the Rings</u> first appeared in paperback. Critics have designated this trilogy as <u>the</u> definitive work of modern epic high fantasy and, as such, is the standard against which all other works in the genre must be measured. Its publication in paperback marked the beginning of a consistent popular market for fantasy literature. Fantasy is more in demand today than it has ever been, and its popularity seems to be still on the rise.

There are several good reasons for choosing a fantasy genre for evaluation. One is that fantasy literature has long been one of the worst offenders against women.

> Women are either ignored or treated as
> props. Their function is to adore the hero
> and, periodically, fall into the hands of
> villains so that the hero can have something
> to do. Quite often, female dialogue consists
> of screams from the sidelines...The hero's love

interest, if one exists, is an idealized version
of femininity, a womanly woman.
(Bogert, 1986, p. 88)

Another reason is that fantasy, especially epic

high fantasy, draws heavily on archetypes, motifs and

symbols that are firmly established in the popular

consciousness. These archetypes, motifs and symbols

are the language of the patriarchy--they tend to

reflect and reenforce the status quo.

A third reason is that there has been some

movement in recent years toward featuring female

protagonists. This could mark the beginnings of a

significant trend that will be important in redefining

literary images of women.

Finally, and most importantly, this very specific

subgenre features one of the most compelling of all

archetypes, the hero, in one of the most compelling of

all motifs, the quest.

> The point is not that the hero's route
> will literally tell us what to do. Captain Hook
> cannot be seen as another face of the atom bomb.
> Rather the point seems to be that we can be
> respirited by the demonstration that, though
> human life has faced horrors of varying dimensions
> through the ages, it has not been the size of the
> horror so much as the quality of the human spirit
> that has kept us surviving and flourishing. That
> is worth remembering in times like these. We
> know we need to be reminded. And the best place
> to go for it is to the classic hero, just as it
> always has been. Fantasy renews our courage and
> brushes up our courage. (Babbitt, 1985, p.825)

The classic hero has generally been a man. But now, with the induction of strong females into the hierarchy of fictional heroes, that dependable source of courage and inspiration just might, on occasion, be a woman.

The rationale for a project like this seems apparent. There is a real need for strong female role models in contemporary fiction. Proof, as presented to Fran Norris Scoble by a ninth grade language arts student, is the question, "Why don't we ever read books about girls?" (Scoble, 1986, p. 85).

Strong role models are essential for the young. Heroes present possibilities. They stimulate the imagination--hinting at what each of us could ultimately become. But for all they can provide, they can also deny. If, in literature, highly valued roles are consistently associated with the same types of individuals (based on gender, religion, race, etc.), individuals not matching images of valued types may be denied opportunities to aspire to those roles.

> One cannot write a successful adventure story about a social character type that the culture cannot conceive in heroic terms; this is why we have so few adventure stories about plumbers, janitors, or street sweepers. (Landon, 1986, p. 64)

Or women. Writers need to provide readers with new alternatives--alternatives that include women who can

be conceived of in heroic terms. Note that these alternatives are not solely for the benefit of women. Strong female role models are as important for males as they are for females. To redefine "woman" in the popular consciousness necessitates the redefinition of "man". To portray women as autonomous and self-reliant changes traditional images of men as protectors and providers.

The need is to foster respect for women among both women and men. Author C. J. Cherryh (1982) offers writers what may be the single most important guideline for portraying women in fiction. "In writing a female character, assume humanity" (p. 26).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Fantasy is a broad genre. It encompasses fairy tales, gothic horror, and science fiction among other subgenres. In the introduction to this paper, it was stated that only epic high fantasy would be evaluated. For the purposes of this paper, the definition of epic high fantasy will be based on guidelines set forth by Margaret E. Macintosh in her article "High Fantasy as a Genre for Children and Youth."

> ...high fantasy, is literature which
> uses preternatural settings, strong
> characters, teratical situations, and non-
> rational phenomena to show an alternative to
> reality. (p. 1)

To clarify, high fantasy is set in an imaginary, secondary world, e.g., Middle Earth, Oz, Narnia. This setting, however exotic, is well defined and characters act within the limits of any ground rules created by the author. Magic is an operational and accepted element of the plot.

Characters may be well rounded, but tend to be specific types and strongly identified with certain character traits and patterns of behavior. Primary characters are often "noble" or "elevated" individuals, e.g., kings/queens, princes/princesses.

That epic high fantasy is a popular form of literature should come as no surprise. It features an epic hero, and epic heroes, e.g., Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Beowulf, have been in demand since the beginnings of storytelling. They are persons of action and integrity. They are doers. Doers, not on a mundane scale, but on a scale that is larger than life. Epic heroes undertake quests. Epic heroes confront all that is evil in the universe and prevail against it. They suffer loss and endure hardship. In the end, they come to great reward for their people and greater self knowledge for themselves.

The formula is simple. Joseph Campbell (1968),

renowned expert on comparative mythologies, reduces the

quest of the epic hero to the following elements.

> The standard path of the mythological
> adventure of the hero is a magnification of
> the formula represented in the rites of passage:
> separation--initiation--return: which might be
> named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.
> A hero ventures forth from the world of
> common day into a region of supernatural wonder:
> fabulous forces are there encountered and a
> decisive victory is won: the hero comes back
> from this mysterious adventure with the power
> to bestow boons on his fellow man. (p. 22)

Novels analyzed as part of this study feature a

female protagonist who undertakes a quest of the type

outlined by Campbell.

One more term needs to be defined. The term is

"female hero." Use of this term may seem unnecessary.

After all, the word "heroine" is already a part of the

language and is defined in dictionaries as the female

counterpart of "hero." "Heroine," however, carries a

negative connotation for some people. Author C.J.

Cherryh (1982) comments on her experience with

"heroines."

> When I was growing up there just weren't
> any female heroes to speak of. Ah, there were
> heroines, but those are different. Heroines
> don't do much in their books but sit in drawing
> rooms and smile and sigh and I hated them.
> (p. 23).

The male protagonist of Helen Cresswell's (1975)

<u>Winter of the Birds</u> comments on the absence of female

heroes in literature by stating that there are no female heroes, only heroines, and those are not the same thing at all. He then elaborates, commenting that a woman who does manage an heroic deed is a one shot hero--having her moment of glory and never being heard from again. True heroes (male heroes), on the other hand, lead heroic lives and never retire from the doing of heroic deeds.

As one step toward remedying this unfortunate perception, Robin McKinley (1985) consciously chose the word "hero" in the title of her 1985 Newbery Award winning novel The Hero and the Crown, the hero of the title being a young lady by the name of Aerin. Used in this sense, "hero" is without gender. It applies to any individual capable of heroic action.

The word needed to designate a female protagonist in epic fantasy literature already exists. It is "hero." Unfortunately, it does not suit the needs of this project because a great many people still think of heroes in exclusively male terms. Because of the predisposition toward male gender, "hero" has been rejected as a sexist designation. "Heroine" has been rejected on the same basis, as well as on evidence that there may be a qualitative difference between "hero" and "heroine."

The preferred designation for a female protagonist in this study is "female hero." "Hero" conveys the essence of the noun and "female" modifies it to indicate that only women have been considered as part of this analysis. Also, use of "female" as an adjective implies that women are a specific subset inherent in the definition of the noun.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

FEMINIST CRITICISM

> ...without a change in some of the
> groundrules for thinking about sexuality, women
> have just about run out of things to do in the
> novel and certainly have run out of patience
> with the characteristics patriarchally oriented
> readers--those attuned to the idea of a culture
> dominated by men--expect of them.
> (Landon, 1986, p. 61)

The same female types have appeared over and over

again in literature. Why? Joanna Russ offers one

possible answer.

> Culture is male. Our literary myths are
> for heroes, not heroines.
> What can a heroine do?
> What myths, what plots, what actions are
> available to a female protagonist?
> Very few. (Ferguson, 1977, p. 389)

Roles available to women in fiction (as in

society) have been defined, sanctioned and perpetuated

by a male dominated culture. Many of these roles have

remained essentially unchanged through the

ages--classic female archetypes: the Earth Mother, the

Shrew, the Witch, the Temptress, the Virgin, the Old

Maid.

> Mainstream fiction customarily reinforces
> the male-dominant image of the world, one in
> which women are defined in terms of their
> relationships to men as mothers or lovers,
> witches or bitches, but seldom as whole human
> beings. (Allen, 1986, p. 170)

Still other images have come down to us in fairy tales. Contemporary feminist Dorothy Jongeward (1986), in her book Women as Winners, discusses women in terms of the images of Cinderella, Beauty, Mother Hubbard, and Red Riding Hood, while Madonna Kolbenschlag (1979), author of Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye, discusses women in relationship to types represented by Cinderella, Beauty, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and Goldilocks.

Literary critic, Mary Ann Ferguson (1977), in her introduction to the anthology, Images of Women in Literature, tries her hand at categorizing women as they have been portrayed in literature. The resulting list is strikingly similar to lists of ancient archetypes. Her types include the Submissive Wife, the Mother, the Dominating Wife, the Woman on a Pedestal, the Sex Object, and the Woman Alone (p. 4). In the second edition of this anthology Ferguson expands the list to include the Liberated Woman--a more recent type in terms of popularity, but not without historical precedent (p. 390).

Taking yet another approach, Mary Ellman and Rosalind Mills each list traits that seem to be common among fictional women. Ellman's (1968) list includes formlessness, passivity, instability, irrationality, and compliancy (p. 55), while Mills' (1974) list adds

slave mentality, submission, resignation, and irony (p. 29). These traits do not indicate generally positive portrayals of women.

Realization that types are not bad in and of themselves is important. Types serve a valuable purpose in literature. Writers often need to represent a class of people through the use of a representative character. Fictional characters may be stereotyped not only by sex, but by social class, race, religion, political affiliation, or any number of other convenient categories. When used correctly, stereotypes are not intended as accurate representations of all individuals in a particular group. Good writers try not to let their characters be limited by types.

> ...individuals may rise above those
> stereotypes and be fully human in spite of the
> limiting images others have of them. Such
> individuals belong in the category of 'The
> Liberated Woman'--a woman who is self aware,
> who in spite of role playing has a sense of
> autonomous self, and who acts, when possible,
> in accordance with her own self image.
> (Ferguson, 1977, p. 390)

The identification of positive types of women in literature is a first step in the process of recreating images of women in the popular consciousness.

A significant hindrance to the process is language itself. Language reflects culture. The dominant

pronouns are masculine. Language as it has been used

in writing reflects mostly male experience. "English

prose is unsuited to the description of feminine being

and doing, unless one to some extent remakes it from

scratch. It is hard to invent; hard to remake one's

mother tongue" (LeGuin, 1986, p. 141).

Non-sexist or inclusive language can help to

alleviate this problem, but the problem is more than a

matter of linguistics. People resist change.

"Feminine being and doing" have not been traditionally

valued in the past; thus, literary representations of

"feminine being and doing" have not been universally

accepted. In fact, they have been widely challenged by

a significant majority, male and female, who accept

traditional images. The images of women that some

writers are striving to change are an integral part of

our culture. To challenge the validity of the popular

notion of a "woman's place" is, in some cases, to

challenge the very foundations of social order.

Literary critics, particularly feminist critics,

have done much to put the problem in perspective and to

develop general guidelines to ameliorate the situation.

Early feminist literary criticism identified problems:

inaccurate stereotypes consistently used to portray

women; women not given the respect given to men; women portrayed as having little self-esteem or autonomy.

Some subsequent critics advocated writing about women as women. This resulted in delineation of female experience and demonstrated that it is, in many respects, qualitatively different from male experience. Questioning is an important part of this delineation. How are men and women different? Why are they different? Are the differences primarily biological? Psychological? Sociological?

The primary drawback of this approach is that it is ultimately limiting. "Sex serves mainly to define gender, and the gender of the person is not exhausted, or even very nearly approached, by the label "man" or "woman" (LeGuin, 1986, p. 143). The dynamics between the sexes are important facets of any examination of role models. Neither sex can exist independently of the other. To redefine images of women is to redefine images of men.

A current trend in feminist criticism is to emphasize humanity rather than femininity. The assumption is that significant literature deals with universals--with the human condition. "To go outward; to develop a sense of community; to look to the moral rather than to the emotional dimension; to make the

right choice and to make it work; these are not only
the tasks of women but of all writers" (Mills, 1974,
p. 197). A writer's perspective is certainly affected
by the writer's gender, but universal themes of
literature--the search for self knowledge, acceptance
of mortality, passage into adulthood--are experienced
by all.

By writing of universal situations and by writing
about women as human beings, writers can create viable
new images. These images integrate "feminine being and
doing" into society and women into the popular
consciousness as valued individuals.

It will not be easy. "Well, it's ever so much
easier to write about men doing things, because most
books about people doing things are about men, and that
is one's literary tradition" (LeGuin, 1986, p. 141).
But not all writers see the challenge being as great as
Ursula LeGuin does. C. J. Cherryh (1982) states,
"...I learned to identify with male characters.
Actually it's easy. They do things I'd do" (p. 23).
To elaborate even further, Cherryh offers some advice
to male writers creating female heroes.

> If he does just a little backing up and
> thinking of living as a woman, solving problems
> with less strength to rely on and coping with
> some of the social situations from a woman's
> viewpoint...he is going to do better, and he's
> going to discover he doesn't have to make as

many allowances as he might think. (p. 29)
Many of the differences between the sexes may not be as
great as we have made them seem. The traditional
literary role of the hero is available to fictional
women. "Take away the factors which have constrained,
limited, and created those differences...and you get a
different psychology than the female fictional
stereotypes" (p. 24).

But as most fictional women are presently
understood, the female hero is an aberration. Her
station as a hero is the result of extenuating
circumstances--a fluke that will be "remedied" as soon
as circumstances are returned to "normal." Female
heroes, because they are heroes, display autonomy--a
trait not normally present or valued in fictional
women. This makes her an alien, an outsider.

> The greater the personal development of a
> hero, the more true she is to herself and the
> more eccentric her relationship to the
> patriarchy. A quality of consciousness that
> is essentially anti-social characterizes the
> most admirable heroes. (Pratt, 1981, p. 169)

Simply providing a scenario is not enough.
Writing must reflect a society that values women and
men equally. Fictional women need to be portrayed as
valued human beings and fictional men must be portrayed
as valuing them. "After all, feminism has to equal
humanism, and humanism must incorporate the idea that

male and female exist together" (Scoble, 1986, p. 85).
In existing together, a new definition may be arrived
at--not a new definition of female or of male but of
human.

> The androgyn envisioned by some as the
> ideal need not be a combination of masculine-
> feminine traits as they have been perceived in
> the old stereotypes; instead a new creature
> should evolve as a re-creation of human traits
> in all individuals. (Ferguson, 1977, p. 4)

Trading places is not the name of the game. Women
are not looking to become men. Women are looking to
attain greater self-knowledge and to redefine
images--images of their personal selves as well as
images in the public consciousness. Stereotypes of men
will change too--they have definition only in
relationship to traditional stereotypes of women.

A new fictional woman is needed to participate in
new scenarios. How should she be portrayed? "I'd
suggest a test for a female hero is this: admirable
qualities which can stir young male readers to identify
with her the way female readers have been able to
identify with male heroes" (Cherryh, 1982, p. 29).

What admirable qualities should be used? "The
perspective which most powerfully represents a female
model...is that which reflects autonomy,
resourcefulness, dignity, and self-reliance" (Scoble,
1986, p. 86).

Female heroes can be created. They have been and are being created. Some of the female heroes that already exist in modern epic fantasy literature will be examined as part of this project.

FANTASY LITERATURE

Fantasy is a genre that can contribute much to developing new images of women and to integrating those images into the popular consciousness. Fantasy deals with wholeness of self and with essential truths that our values are based upon. "For fantasy is true of course. It isn't factual, but it is true" (LeGuin, 1986, p. 44).

It is not important that there are no Hobbits or Elves, Orcs or Goblins. It is not important that Middle Earth never existed. The essence of <u>The Lord of the Rings</u> does not lie in Tolkien's creation of a secondary world, but in a story that pits good against evil and extols the virtues of courage, loyalty, sacrifice, friendship and love. No matter how outrageous the trappings, fantasy always deals with the human condition.

> ...the creators of fantasy may use the most fantastic, weird and bizarre images and happenings but their basic concern is with the wholesomeness of the human soul, or to use a more contemporary term, the integrity of self....
> (Egoff, 1981, p. 80)

A common perception of fantasy is that it is for children. It is. But, it is not just for children. All fantasy has at its center the struggle for self-knowledge and self-worth. But because it need not be factual, fantasy is capable of transcending barriers that limit other genres. "An adult may respond to magic on one level, a child on another. But respond they do. Magic does not discriminate according to age, sex, or ethnic origin" (Zahorski and Boyer, 1979, p. ix).

Fantasy, more than any other genre, can deal in possibilities. It can shed the conventions of contemporary society and create the environment desired in order to deal with real human problems. As C. J. Cherryh (1982) states about science fiction, a fantasy subgenre, "One department in which science fiction has had vast advantage over other forms of literature is in the creation of choices...pointing out open doors and saying there's a way out of this" (p. 23).

All literature attempts to give readers a new perspective on the human condition. With fantasy, that perspective is more literal, more concrete. If there is a need for a society that values women equally with men, create one--show us a world in which women, as well as men, are encouraged to achieve "integration of

self." ✓Fantasy gives writers that kind of leeway.
"Fantasy is the most visionary of fictional genres:
tied as all art is to emotional truth, it is freer than
any other literary form to escape mere actuality"
(Waggoner, 1978, p. 25).

To date, fantasy writers have not exploited the
potential of the genre when it has come to
characterizing women. As stated in the introduction,
women have largely been portrayed in secondary and
subservient roles. There are signs, however, that
fantasists are beginning to flex their collective
muscle and once again extend the range of the
genre--and of human experience. Female heroes,
especially in epic high fantasy novels, are appearing
in increasing numbers.

Female heroes within the genre of fantasy are
especially important. Fantasy can give the image of
the female hero validity by adding the weight of
tradition. Epic high fantasy is written in the
language of the patriarchy--archetypal characters,
symbols and motifs that have held sway since the
beginnings of literary tradition.

These symbols are powerful. They inhabit our
unconscious and populate our dreams. Carl Jung (1962),
in Man and His Symbols, was among the first to

articulate their nature and to suggest the existence of a "collective unconscious"--a system of universal symbols shared by all humankind and transcending racial, linguistic and cultural differences. Joseph Campbell (1968), in Hero with a Thousand Faces, traced the archetype of the hero and the motif of the quest through world mythologies, establishing a concrete literary argument in support of Jung. Bruno Bettelheim's (1976) The Uses of Enchantment builds a case for retaining fairy tales in the education of children because of the powerful archetypal machinery at work.

One problem is that the symbols at work come from a male dominated society. However, one of the most powerful and valued archetypes, that of the hero, has been carefully studied and delineated by Joseph Campbell and others. The character type of the hero and the elements of the quest motif have been stripped down to their essential components. Gender is not a prerequisite for an archetypal hero. Women, characterized as heroes, can be plugged into the complex archetypal machinery and produce the same results that a male hero can. "I'd suggest a test for a female hero is this: admirable qualities which can stir young male readers to identify with her the way

female readers have been able to identify with male

heroes" (Cherryh, 1982, p. 29). Children can be shown

that women are capable of coping with the world on

their own terms.

Fantasy is often incorrectly labeled as "escapist"

literature. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Fantasy allows readers the opportunity to vicariously

experience the best and the worst of the world in which

they live.

> The divine, the magical, the heroic, the
> lovely, the wicked, and the good are embodied
> in rational form so that they can be dealt with
> in ordinary, personal terms. Like realism,
> fantasy allows the reader to identify with the
> protagonist and experience his adventures just
> as he would if he were in the protagonist's
> place. (Waggoner, 1978, p. 27)

Fantasy does not offer escape. It offers

simplification.

> ...fantasy at its best provides patterns
> for understanding ourselves and our world. It
> simplifies, distills, and reduces the vast
> complications of our lives to a level where
> simple decisions and direct actions once again
> seem possible. (Babbitt, 1985, p. 824)

Because fantasy simplifies, because it reduces

complex issues to choices between polar opposites, it

could even be considered as a basis for parts of an

elementary curriculum. Kieran Eagan (1983), like Bruno

Bettelheim, suggests that the world is far too complex

to be comprehended in its subtlety by elementary

students.   According to Eagan, one way of helping young

people cope with dilemmas may be putting certain

concepts into fantasy story formats.   The assumption is

that our initial conceptualization of the world begins

with our grasp of the extremes (e.g. hunger and thirst

as opposed to the absence of those conditions) and that

young students can more readily grasp situations that

are set up as polar opposites (p. 2).

Fantasy at its best does not offer easy solutions.

If there is a "happily ever after" associated with a

fantasy story, it has been purchased at a price.   As

Lloyd Alexander observes, "High fantasy offers no

escape from the fact that 'being alive in the world is

a hard piece of business'" (Macintosh, p. 1).   The hard

choices made by fantasy heroes are, at heart, the same

hard choices each of us must make in his/her own life.

For this reason, "Fantasy, by its power to move us so

deeply, to dramatize, even melodramatize, morality, can

be one of the most effective means of establishing a

capacity for adult values" (Nadelman, 1983, p. 10).

Fantasy can go hand in hand with the need to

redefine images of women in literature.   It deals with

the human condition and can be free of the

constrictions of prevailing social mores.   It uses

compelling symbols and themes to deal with important

moral issues and speaks effectively to the young. But, as previously stated, fantasy has been guilty of not realizing its potential--especially in regard to redefining images of women. That is changing.

> Fantasy seems to be becoming more humane,
> more aware of the potential of all kinds of
> human creations, more willing to consider
> significant changes in the human condition, less
> willing to rely on formulas and obsolete
> materials. (Waggoner, 1978, p. 64)

If this trend is realized, the genre will again be responsible for extending the range of possibilities open to us. All of us, readers and writers, male and female alike, will be participating in the active redefinition of ourselves.

> The fantasist, whether he uses the
> ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the
> younger ones of science and technology, may
> be talking as seriously as any sociologist--
> and a good deal more directly--about human
> life as it is lived, and as it ought to be
> lived. (LeGuin, 1986, p. 58)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Novels analyzed as part of this research are epic

high fantasy novels that feature a female hero and have

been published since 1965. "High fantasy" indicates

that the action of the novel takes place in an

imaginary, secondary world; that the characters will be

strong, well-defined types; and that magic is an

accepted element of plot.

"Epic" indicates that the hero embarks on an

archetypal quest of the type outlined by Joseph

Campbell (1968) in his work Hero with a Thousand Faces.

Briefly stated, the hero is called to leave the real

world and enter a magical realm where she confronts and

defeats evil forces while searching for, and ultimately

winning, a boon to take back to the real world for the

benefit of her people.

Titles selected on the basis of the above criteria

have also been recommended in at least two of the

following sources: Booklist, School Library Journal,

Senior High School Library Catalog, Junior High School

Library Catalog, Ruth Nadelman's Fantasy for Children,

Dianna Waggoner's The Hills of Faraway, Pat Pflieger's

A Reference Guide to Modern Fantasy for Children, or

Zahorski and Boyer's <u>Fantasy Literature: A Core</u>
<u>Collection and Reference Guide.</u>

Fantasy literature is especially difficult to
classify according to the age of the target audience.
The use of symbolism and imaginative devices make it
accessible to an unusually wide range of individuals.
Because the recommending sources are primarily
professional materials intended for the use of school
media specialists, and because the content of most
novels meeting the specified criteria is of a
reasonably sophisticated nature, it was assumed that
the novels analyzed are accessible to students in
grades 7-12.

Each work was analyzed on the basis of the
author's portrayal of a female hero. Each portrayal
was analyzed and assigned a degree which represented
possession and/or demonstration of certain qualities
deemed essential in a literary hero of this genre.
Each female hero was evaluated by how successfully she
avoided certain "stereotypical" traits.

One thing that became apparent in reviewing
literature for this study was that much has been
written about how <u>not</u> to depict women. Many articles
discussing images of women in literature said, in
effect, "Don't read these books because women are

inaccurately portrayed in the following ways...." Based on the prevalence of this approach, there seems to be a need for materials that bring attention to titles that redefine traditional female roles--articles that recommend works based on their strengths rather than reject them for their weaknesses--articles that say, "Read these books!"

The following quote from Fran Norris Scoble (1986) mentions four traits that are desirable in a female protagonist. "The perspective which most powerfully represents a female model for students is that which reflects autonomy, resourcefulness, dignity, and self-reliance" (p. 86).

Mary Ann Ferguson (1977) states two more admirable traits, "The liberated woman is herself, takes pride in herself, and in doing so, inspires others" (p. 390), and, "Awareness and self-knowledge, however painful, are the price of being fully human--a price worth paying" (p. 39).

C.J. Cherryh (1982) adds another, "...when the complexes of artificial restraint and diminution of self confidence are removed, hesitations and uncertainties will disappear, where barriers to physical activity are removed, women will be more active..." (p. 25).

These statements formed the basis of the
instrument used in analyzing the novels chosen for this
project. It should be made clear that the individuals
quoted above were not alone in expressing these ideas.
On the contrary, these quotations are simply
representative of ideas that appeared over and over
again in the course of the review of
literature--positive ideas about how women should be
depicted in fiction.

Simply stated, the seven points of analysis are:
autonomy, resourcefulness, dignity, self-reliance,
inspiration, physical ability, and self-knowledge. On
the instrument itself, each trait is followed by two
questions. The purpose of the questions is threefold.
First, to determine if and to what degree each trait
exists in the respective female heroes. Archetypal
heroes are positive types--as such, they usually
display, to some degree, positive traits valued by
their society. Second, to determine if and to what
degree each trait is negatively affected by the hero's
being female. Finally, a primary function of the
questions is to render the points of evaluation more
concrete by stating criteria used to define each trait.

A single number, one (1) through four (4), was
recorded in response to each question, indicating the

degree to which the trait was exhibited. The number 1
indicated that the hero did not exhibit the trait in
question; 2 indicated that the trait was seldom in
evidence; 3 indicated that the trait was frequently in
evidence; and 4 indicated that the trait was
consistently in evidence. Each item (the trait and
attendant questions) was followed by a space labeled
"COMMENT" that allowed for a brief elaboration.

Records also were kept of two other important
facts. One was the marital status of the female hero
and any changes in that status that occurred during the
course of the novel. The other was the type of
society--patriarchal, matriarchal, egalitarian, or
other--in which the female hero was found. The
instrument also contained space for pertinent
bibliographic data.

Predictions were made based on research done in
preparation for this project. Because the archetype of
the hero is so well defined and so much a part of our
culture, women cast in the role of the hero are going
to take on many, if not all, of the desirable traits
that accompany the role. Because the role is so well-
defined, gender has less importance. Within the well
defined limits of this role, men and women are more
nearly equal. If this is reflected in the novels, a

majority of the responses to the first question in each
pair would be scores of either 3 or 4.

Sexual stereotypes are strong cultural elements
and could be manifested even in characterizations of
heroic women. If the respective authors have
successfully avoided traditional stereotypes of women,
a majority of the responses to the second question in
each pair will be scores of either 1 or 2.

Several of the works analyzed were parts of
series. If the works in a series formed a continuous
story and featured the same female hero throughout, the
series was analyzed as a single work. If an analyzed
work contained more than one significant female hero, a
checklist was filled out for each hero in the work.

The combined titles analyzed as part of this
project may also serve as a selective bibliography.
All of the titles included in the analysis have been
recommended in professional selection tools. They also
were analyzed and selected a second time based on the
more specific criteria for this project. The resulting
bibliography is a list of epic high fantasy novels that
are recommended because they feature female
protagonists. To the best of the researcher's
knowledge, no such list exists. Hopefully, this list

can be used to answer future students inquiring, "Why
don't we ever read books about girls?"

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Thirteen female heroes from twelve novels were analyzed. The twelve novels represented a total of nineteen books because four of the female heroes were featured in series that told a continuing story--each series was, therefore, treated as a single title. A clear majority of the female heroes exhibited the seven behaviors associated with heroes of modern epic high fantasy. The data support the first hypothesis that females cast in the role of hero in epic high fantasy novels demonstrate the same traits as do males in the same role. One may assume, then, that even though male heroes predominate, male gender need not be a prerequisite for heroes in this genre. Women seem to function very well in the role. See Table 1 for a display of data for hypothesis one and its related sub-hypotheses.

All thirteen heroes demonstrated autonomy and had strong senses of self-worth--seven received 4's and the other six received 3's. A majority of heroes also were not defined in terms of relationships with males. Nine women were depicted as being totally independent and were given 1's. The other four received 2's. In several instances a female character's identity and

function were mutually dependent upon those of a

male--this was not interpreted as female dependency.

Table 1

Number of Female Heroes in Epic High Fantasy Novels
Depicting Selected Traits

Traits	Degree of Trait Possession				Degree of Trait Avoidance			
	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
AUTONOMY	7	6					4	9
RESOURCEFULNESS	11	2					3	10
DIGNITY	9	4			1	2	3	7
SELF-RELIANCE	10	3					1	12
INSPIRATION	6	5	2				5	8
PHYSICAL ABILITY	6	4	2	1		1	5	7
SELF-KNOWLEDGE	13							13

Note. Trait possession = female hero traits are
comparable to traditional male hero traits, 4 - highest
degree; Trait avoidance = female hero traits are
affected by being "female", 4 - highest degree.

The female heroes are very resourceful

individuals. Eleven of them received 4's, indicating

that they are very capable of thinking on their feet

and using their wits to get out of tight spots. The

remaining two were assigned scores of 3. In response

to the "avoidance" question concerning resourcefulness,

ten of the female heroes were not portrayed as being at

a disadvantage because of their gender. They received 1's. The three other women received scores of 2.

Dignity was also a trait consistently demonstrated by the female heroes. Nine of the thirteen women were consistently treated with respect and showed that same respect to others. The remaining four women received 2's. Response to the "avoidance" question, however, is quite varied. Only ten of the thirteen responses fall within the predicted range. Seven women received 1's, indicating that no special concessions are made for them because of their gender. Three women got 2's. Of those not falling within the predicted range, two received 3's and one individual received a 4, indicating that she was consistently treated with special deference because she was a woman.

Self-reliance was a very consistent trait. All of the female heroes had confidence in their abilities and were ready to trust themselves with difficult tasks before enlisting anyone else's help. Ten of the heroes were assigned 4's and the remaining three received 3's. Twelve of the thirteen women never encountered a situation they felt had to be handled by a man and received 1's. The lone exception received a 2, still placing the response within the predicted range.

Six of the female heroes received 4's in the
category of inspiration because they were natural
leaders and inspired confidence in their followers.
Another five women received 3's because of good
leadership skills. Two received 2's, which put them
outside of the predicted range. These individuals
neither found themselves in formal leadership
situations nor were the type to take initiative.
Response to the "avoidance" question was more
consistent. When the female heroes chose to lead,
others were willing to follow--gender was
inconsequential. Eight women received 1's and five
received 2's.

Physical ability is a trait that is less
consistently demonstrated among the female heroes.
Four responses were outside of the predicted range.
Six female heroes consistently manifested high degrees
of physical ability and received 4's. Another four
received 3's. However, two women were assigned 2's and
one was assigned a 1. These last three female heroes
did not, for the most part, find themselves in
situations that called for them to display physical
prowess. In response to the second question, seven of
the heroes got 1's because their gender was not a
hinderance to physical performance. Five more received

2's. One hero received a 3, indicating a tendency
within that book to perceive women as physically less
capable than men.

One trait was demonstrated with complete
consistency. The trait is self-knowledge. Each of the
thirteen heroes suffered personal loss and gained
personal insight. In none of the thirteen cases was
the achievement of the hero diminished because of
gender. This result is consistent with the "hero
quest" motif--loss and subsequent insight are central
ideas.

Data were collected for two other hypotheses.
One hypothesis was that a majority of the female heroes
would be single as their stories started, but would be
married as their stories ended. The results confirmed
the hypothesis as seven of the thirteen heroes followed
that pattern. Of the other six female heroes, four
remained single throughout their respective tales; one
was married throughout her story, and one began her
story as a married woman but was later widowed. (See
Table 2)

The other hypothesis for which data were collected
stated that a majority of the societies portrayed in
epic high fantasy novels would be traditional

patriarchal societies with power in the hands of males.

(See table 3)

Table 2

Marital Status of Female Heroes in Epic High Fantasy
Novels

Titles	Marital Status			
	Single	Single/ Married	Married	Married/ Single
Alanna	x			
Beauty		x		
The Blue Sword		x		
The Darkangel		x		
The Forgotten Beasts of Eld		x		
The Hero and the Crown		x		
The Oval Amulet		x		
A Princess of the Chameln		x		
Riddle of Stars	x			
The Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant (Linden Avery)	x			
The Second Chronicles... (The First of the Search)			x	
The Tombs of Atuan	x			
With a Tangled Skein				x

The results tabulated in Table 3 show that nine of the twelve novels feature traditional patriarchal societies, thereby confirming the hypothesis. Three of the novels feature egalitarian societies in which men and women are treated equally, and none of the novels features a matriarchal society.

Table 3

Society Types in Epic High Fantasy Novels

Title	Society Types		
	Patriarchal	Matriarchal	Egalitarian
Alanna	x		
Beauty	x		
The Blue Sword	x		
The Darkangel	x		
The Forgotten Beasts of Eld	x		
The Hero and the Crown	x		
The Oval Amulet			x
A Princess of the Chameln			x
Riddle of Stars	x		
The Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant			x
The Tombs of Atuan	x		
With a Tangled Skein	x		

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The data confirmed the hypothesis that women cast in the role of hero in modern epic high fantasy novels display the same traits as men cast in the same role. Several aspects of the study, however, need further discussion.

First of all, given the abstract nature of the traits measured, any quantification is going to be partially subjective. It was not possible to be totally objective while attempting to assess such qualities as autonomy, resourcefulness, or inspiration. Any definition of abstract terms is subject to the interpretation of the researcher.

Not only are the definitions open to interpretation, but the degree to which the traits manifest themselves is a partially subjective judgment. What constitues "consistently"? How often is "seldom"? These degrees can vary significantly with different researchers. Conclusions drawn from the data are, therefore, generalizations. The data suggest that there are female heroes in fantasy who redefine the reader's views of women. It is entirely possible for women to operate comfortably and successfully in the role of hero.

The definition of the role of hero is also questionable. Certainly the definition used here is not exhaustive. Are there other traits that can be used as a basis for comparison of male and female heroes? And what about the stories themselves? Are the quests of female heroes as challenging as those of male heroes? As important? As exciting?

Several questions lead to a host of potential other studies. Do the results carry over into other genres of fiction? Are other incarnations of the female hero viable? Can women be cast as heroes in Westerns or murder mysteries or political thrillers? If so, is it being done? It would be very difficult to conclude with any certainty that the small sampling of novels used for this project represents any kind of a significant trend. Results of the study, however, indicate that there are some significant works in this one genre.

The trait where the results deviated the most from the predicted results was the trait of physical ability. Even though there were some heroes with outstanding credentials, the majority were weaker here than in other categories. A possible explanation is that this, more than the other traits analyzed, runs counter to public perceptions of women. Physically

strong, independent women are not the norm and perhaps
this colored the characterizations of some of the
heroes. Because people are often unaware that their
perceptions are affected by internalized stereotypes,
they are very hard to identify and to change.

Although the second hypothesis (that the majority
of heroes would be single at adventure's beginning but
married at adventure's end) was confirmed by the data,
the closeness of the results may be significant. No
other alternative approached the traditional pattern in
frequency, but the cumulation of all other alternatives
made the results very close. This result could reflect
current thinking that women have more different
lifestyle options open to them now than ever before.
Another possible study could examine the effect of
lifestyle on the performance of the hero.

The tally of society types was enlightening. It
was encouraging to see that three of the novels took
place in settings that were egalitarian--that treated
all equally. It was disheartening, however, that nine
of the novels were set in traditional patriarchal
societies where men were in power and women were not.
This is especially disconcerting in light of the fact
that all but two of the novelists were women. In fact,
one of the male novelists, Stephen R. Donaldson, is

responsible for creating The Land, the most democratic
fantasy world the researcher has encountered.

Of all genres, fantasy gives the writer the most
freedom to recreate the world. One of the biggest
liabilities of contemporary fantasy fiction is
conservatism in terms of reinventing and redefining
social customs and institutions. As a case in point,
even though all of the novels analyzed featured female
heroes, few other significant female characters were in
these novels. These women are aberrations and not part
of an accepted norm.

Another cause for concern is that the female
heroes were all white. Race was not something the
instrument was designed to measure, but it became
apparent during the search for usable novels. Racial
purity seems to be very strong in secondary worlds.

Another consideration in evaluating this project
is the gender of the authors. Works analyzed were not
limited to those written by women. Even though only
two male authors were included, one must question
whether or not their approaches to creating fictional
females are qualitatively the same as those of women.
This is a controversial topic among literary critics
and needs to be considered in greater detail. It
certainly could affect the results of this project and

is an excellent candidate as a topic for further
research.

Even though it was not intended to be an analyzed
statistic, compilation of the data revealed that
copyright dates of the books were interesting. Nine of
the twelve works used in the project are copyrighted in
the 1980's. Of the others, the oldest works are Ursula
LeGuin's The Tombs of Atuan and Patricia McKillip's The
Riddle-master of Hed, both copyrighted in 1974. If
there is a trend toward female heroes in epic high
fantasy, it seems to be relatively recent.

The lack of many pre-1980 titles could mean
several things. It could mean that no significant epic
high fantasy novels featuring women were written prior
to 1974. Or, it could mean that appropriate works of
that vintage are no longer available in many libraries
and bookstores. Or, it could mean that they were
simply missed by the researcher. No source listing
women in fantasy literature exists. In fact, many of
the standard reference works, e.g., Zahorsky and Boyer,
The Hills of Faraway, are often not much help because
no indication of a character's gender is included.
After reading a summary of The Blue Sword, who would
know that Harry Crewe is female? And what gender would
one arbitrarily assign to heroes named Paragrin or The

First of the Search? Frequently, reading the novel is the only way to determine if it has a female hero. The selection process involved use of the standard reviewing sources and continuous browsing through bookstores. Any number of titles could easily have been missed. Given the difficulty of assembling this small list, these titles may offer a welcome starting point for future research.

Several good titles were considered for inclusion but were not used for various reasons. Anne McCaffrey's "Dragonrider" series was not included because it is technically science fiction. Marion Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon was not used because it does not quite fit the pattern of the epic hero. C. J. Cherryh has written a very good trilogy featuring a warrior-wizard, Morgaine, (The Gate of Ivrel, The Well of Shiuan, The Fires of Azeroth) that was not included because reviews were not available from the appropriate sources. The same can be said for Marta Randall's novel The Sword of Winter. Two frequently cited works, Ruth Nichols' The Marrow of the World and Jane Gaskell's "Atlan" series were not found by the researcher.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to see if writers of modern epic high fantasy are contributing to the redefinition of the concept of "woman" in the popular consciousness. Using the hero of the epic high fantasy novel as an example of a fictional role that has been almost exclusively male in the past, the analysis identified salient traits of the role and found that women do function successfully within the definition of the role.

Twelve of the modern epic high fantasy novels supported the hypothesis that women cast in the role of hero will demonstrate the same traits and abilities that men do when cast in that same role. The specific qualities that were identified and analyzed were autonomy, resourcefullness, dignity, self-reliance, inspiration, physical ability, and self-knowledge. Each hero was given a score of one (1) through four (4) in response to each of two questions designed to measure the degree to which the trait in question was present.

If the hero in question functioned successfully as a hero, responses for the first question for each trait were 3 or 4. If the hero successfully avoided traditional female stereotypes, responses for the

second questions for each trait were 1 or 2. All of
the heroes had scores within the predicted range in a
majority, at least four, of the seven traits.

A second hypothesis was that a majority of the
heroes would be single as they began their quests and
be married when they finished. The results showed that
seven (7) of the thirteen (13) female heroes followed
the predicted pattern.

A third hypothesis proposed that a majority of the
societies portrayed in the epic high fantasy novels
analyzed would be traditional patriarchal societies.
This hypothesis was confirmed by the data. Nine of the
twelve societies were patriarchal.

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Appendix A

Annotated Bibliography of Works Analyzed

Anthony, Piers. With a Tangled Skein. New York:
     Ballantine, 1985.

     Beautiful Niobe comes to love her husband Cedric
in spite of the fact that their marriage was a match
arranged by their parents. Shortly after the birth of
a son, however, Cedric is murdered. Journeying to
Purgatory, Niobe pleads with the incarnation of Death
for the return of her husband. The request is
rejected. Niobe later learns that it was she who was
marked for death by Satan--Cedric sacrificed himself
that she might live. To achieve a measure of revenge,
Niobe accepts an offer to serve as an aspect of the
Incarnation of Fate. As Clotho, Niobe contends head to
head with Satan as he tries to weave a web of deceit
that will ensnare her granddaughter. Her only
salvation lies in a direct confrontation with Satan in
Hell.

Babbitt, Lucy Cullyford. The Oval Amulet. New York:
     Harper and Row, 1985.

     Paragrin has no reason to feel that she is
special. Slowly, however, she comes to realize that
the oval, iron amulet she was given by an imprisoned
woman is the token of the female ruling family of Melde
and that the woman was her mother. In better times,
one woman and one man had ruled together over the land
of Melde. Then the tyrant Trag deposed his queen and
placed all power in the hands of his male descendants.
Made aware of the amulet's existence, Trag's son Strap
tries to hunt down Paragrin but is foiled as she takes
refuge among the Ductae--survivors of Trag's purge of
women in power. The Ductae recognize the amulet and
hail Paragrin as their leader. Paragrin, her male
friend Cam, and the Ductae prepare for war and return
to confront Strap and his army one last time.

Donaldson, Stephen R. The Wounded Land. New York:
     Ballantine, 1980.

Also: The One Tree. New York: Ballantine,
            1982.

        White Gold Weilder. New York:
            Ballantine, 1983.

    Collectively, these novels are known as The Second
Chronicles of Thomas Covenant. As such, they are
somewhat of a sequel themselves, but it is not
necessary to have read the first trilogy to understand
this one.
    Volume one finds the leper, Thomas Covenant and
his doctor, Linden Avery, summoned to the Land by Lord
Foul. He has summoned them to serve as the instruments
of the Land's destruction. The once beautiful Land has
already been afflicted by the Sunbane--a powerful charm
that causes unnatural phenomena. The Land's only hope
lies with Linden and Covenant constructing a new staff
of law from the One Tree. As volume one ends, they
have just encountered a company of giants. The giants,
under the leadership of a dauntless woman known as the
First of the Search, are searching for a lost
expedition of Giants that had once journeyed to the
Land. When Covenant tells the First of the fate of the
previous party of giants and explains the implications,
the giantish party offers its assistance and the use of
its ocean vessel to travel to the Island of the One
Tree.
    Volume two concerns the adventures encountered on
the way to the Island of the One Tree. Hardships are
many, lives are lost, and the mission ends in failure.
The company is unable to secure wood from the One Tree
for a new staff of law.
    In the final volume the company returns to the
Land to try and somehow cope with the threat of Lord
Foul. Every effort seems to play into the Despiser's
hands. As Linden and Covenant face him alone, the
victory of "despite" over the Land seems assured. In
desperation, Covenant becomes a martyr. Linden then is
able to turn Lord Foul's own power against him, and the
Land is saved.

LeGuin, Ursula K. The Tombs of Atuan. New York:
    Atheneum, 1974.

    Tenar was taken from her home as an infant so she
could be trained as a priestess to the Nameless Ones.
When walking through the labyrinthine tombs under the
temple one day, she encounters an intruder, the young
wizard Ged. Tradition dictates that he must be killed,

but she is fascinated by him. She alone can lead him
out of the darkness of the catacombs. Should she kill
him and affirm the values imposed upon her by her
office? Or should she lead him out of the maze and
escape with him to what may be a new and freer world?
She opts for the latter choice and experiences a
personal freedom previously unknown to her.

McKillip, Patricia. The Forgotten Beasts of Eld.
     New York: Atheneum, 1976.

     Sybil has been raised and now orphaned by the
powerful wizard Ogam. Now, she has, in turn, been
called upon to raise an infant herself. The child's
name is Tamlorn, son of a contender for the throne.
Unaware of Tam's parentage, Sybil is unwittingly drawn
into the politics of the realm. After she is nearly
enslaved by a wizard in the employ of King Drede, she
is outraged. She marries Coren, whose family is
striving to depose Drede. Using her husband's station
to advantage and enlisting the aid of the legendary,
magical beasts of Eld who are hers alone to control,
she exacts a terrible revenge.

McKillip, Patricia. The Riddle-Master of Hed. New
     York: Atheneum, 1976.

          Also: Heir of Sea and Fire. New York:
                    Atheneum, 1977.

                Harpist in the Wind. New York:
                    Atheneum, 1979.

     Collectively these volumes are known as Riddle of
the Stars. Volume one is the story of Morgon of Hed.
He is compelled to journey north to Erlenstar Mountain,
home of The High One, in an attempt to answer questions
about his heritage and his destiny. After a harrowing
journey, he arrives to find that The High One is gone,
and the evil wizard Ohm is waiting in ambush.
     Volume two concerns the quest of Raederle,
Morgon's betrothed, for Morgon. In the company of
Morgon's sister, Tristan, and a professional soldier,
Lyra, Raederle searches the breadth of the continent.
When she finally finds him, both characters have
learned surprising things about themselves. Raederle
finds that not only is her destiny inextricably
intertwined with Morgon's, it is just as important.
     Volume three is the story of Raederle and Morgon
together as they travel to the ancient wizard's city of

Lungold. There, they confront Ohm and restore order to
a world in chaos. Finally together in a world at
peace, Morgon and Raederle decide that their destinies
now separate and choose not to marry.

McKinley, Robin. <u>Beauty</u>. New York: Harper and Row,
    1978.

    <u>Beauty</u> is an elaboration on the fairy tale "Beauty
and the Beast". Helping her family cope with difficult
times (the collapse of the family shipping business,
the repossession of their home, the tragic loss of her
eldest sister's fiance at sea), Beauty grows to
become--if not a beauty--a compassionate, ambitious,
independent young woman. When her father comes home on
a cold winter's evening with his fantastic tale of
trespass into the magical garden of the Beast, it is
Beauty who selflessly volunteers to return to the
Beast's palace as payment for the rose that her father
had taken. Living with the Beast, Beauty learns to
understand and finally to love him--saving him from his
magical exile and allowing him to live with her as a
normal human being.

McKinley, Robin. <u>The Blue Sword</u>. New York:
    Greenwillow, 1982.

    Harry Crewe is kidnapped by Corath, king of the
Hill People of Damar. As she adapts to the life of
these desert nomads, she discovers two things. First,
that she is extraordinarily gifted with "kelar"--a kind
of psychic energy that makes her capable of some
astonishing feats. Secondly, her fate is closely
linked to that of Corath and his people. Accepting her
fate, she becomes the warrior Harimad-Sol and leads the
Hill People to a decisive victory over inhuman invaders
from the North. After her triumph she marries Corath
and rules as queen of Damar.

McKinley, Robin. <u>The Hero and the Crown</u>. New York:
    Greenwillow, 1985.

    Although Aerin is the daughter of the king of
Damar, she will never rule because of her mother's
questionable lineage. Looking to find a sense of
worth, she takes up dragon slaying. When an ancient
prophecy comes true and all of Damar is threatened by
an enormous, supernatural, black dragon, it is Aerin
who slays it and saves the day. She is seriously

burned during the confrontation but is saved from death
by the wizard Luthe. Aerin then travels to the North
to confront an evil wizard and again save the kingdom.
Returning home, she ascends the throne through marriage
to her father's appointed successor.

Pierce, Meredith Ann. The Darkangel. New York: Tom
    Doherty, 1982.

    Also: A Gathering of Gargoyles. New York: Tom
            Doherty, 1982.

        This series is a projected trilogy. The final
volume has not been completed. Volume one begins when
Aeriel's mistress is slain and her spirit enslaved by a
Darkangel (vampire). With magical help from a dwarf, a
lion, and a mystical winged horse, Aeriel gets a chance
for revenge. Given the opportunity to slay the
Darkangel, however, Aeriel puts her own life in
jeopardy in order to return him to mortal form.
        In volume two Aeriel and Irrylath (the former
Darkangel) are married only to find that the marriage
cannot be consummated while the White Witch lives. The
White Witch was responsible for turning Irrylath into a
Darkangel. After a harrowing journey to enlist
support, Aeriel is ready to confront the White Witch.
As volume two comes to a close, Aeriel, Irrylath, his
brothers, and a company of magical beasts are preparing
to journey to the White Witch's stronghold.

Pierce, Tamora. Alanna: The First Adventure. New
    York: Atheneum, 1983.

    Also: In The Hand of the Goddess. New York:
            Atheneum, 1984.

          The Woman Who Rides Like a Man. New
            York: Atheneum, 1985.

        This series chronicles the adventures of Alanna, a
young girl who wants desperately to become a knight.
Trading places with her twin brother, who would rather
study magic anyway, Alanna gets her chance. Volume one
chronicles Alanna's (now known as Alan) year as a page.
She distinguishes herself in all fields of endeavor,
but does particularly well in equestrian and combat
events--all the while concealing her gender. Crown
Prince John chooses her as his personal squire. She
discloses her secret to him as they solve the riddle of
the mysterious Black City.

In volume two, Alanna protects John and the royal
family from the machinations of an evil wizard, John's
nefarious uncle, Duke Roger. Revealing her secret to
all, Alanna successfully completes the test of
knighthood.

In volume three, Alanna sets off to prove herself
as a warrior maiden. During her adventures she also
tries to deal with her strong feelings for the two men
who love her--Prince John and George Cooper, King of
the Thieves.

Wilder, Cherry. A Princess of the Chameln. New
     York: Atheneum, 1984.

The Chameln lands are traditionally ruled by two
monarchs--one female and one male. Aidris is the next
female in line for the throne. The succession does not
seem to be in question, but when the king and queen are
assassinated, Aidris and Sharn (the male heir-apparent)
are driven from their homeland by a wave of invaders
from neighboring Mel'Nir. Seeking shelter and relative
safety in the neutral nation of Athron, Aidris serves
anonymously in the royal guard of that country. Her
years in exile serve her well as she matures to
adulthood, all the while awaiting the day she can
return to the Chameln lands and assume her rightful
position as one of the sovereigns of that nation.

Appendix B

Sample Checklist

CRITERIA CHECKLIST:
    Seven traits, each deemed essential to the positive
portrayal of a female hero, appears on the checklist. Each
trait is followed by a pair of questions. Each question is
preceded by a single digit ranging from one (1) through four
(4). A response of 1 indicates that the particular behavior
is not exhibited by this female hero. A response of 2
indicates that the behavior is seldom in evidence. A
response of 3 indicates that the behavior is frequently
displayed. A response of 4 indicates that the behavior is
consistently in evidence.

I. AUTONOMY

    ___A) Does the female hero display a strong sense of self
        and/or self worth?
    ___B) Is her self image dependent on her relationship
        with a male?

    COMMENT:

II. RESOURCEFULNESS

    ___A) Does the female hero have the native intelligence to
        solve difficult problems?
    ___B) Is she portrayed as being at a disadvantage because
        of being female?

    COMMENT:

III. DIGNITY

    ___A) Is the female hero treated with the dignity and
        respect that should be accorded to every human
        being?
    ___B) Are special concessions made because she is female?

    COMMENT:

IV. SELF RELIANCE

_____A) Does the female hero try to resolve difficult
       situations by herself?
_____B) Does the hero feel that some situations must be
       resolved by a male?

COMMENT:

V. INSPIRATION

_____A) Does the female hero lead with integrity and inspire
       confidence in others?
_____B) Does the fact that the hero is female adversely
       effect the willingness of others to follow her lead?

COMMENT:

VI. PHYSICAL ABILITY

_____A) Does the female hero exhibit physical traits
       required of an epic hero (e.g. stamina, strength,
       agility)?
_____B) Is the hero lacking in physical ability because she
       is female?

COMMENT:

VII. SELF KNOWLEDGE

_____A) Does the female hero suffer loss and come to greater
       self knowledge in the course of her quest?
_____B) Is the hero's victory diminished (perceived as less
       valuable) because of her being female?

COMMENT: