

‘Jeg er ikke bange for dig’: Elements of the
(Anti)Hero’s Journey in Two Classics
of 1970s Danish Children’s Literature

Guy Puzey

Introduction

Leif Esper Andersen’s *Heksefeber* (1973) and Ole Lund Kirkegaard’s *Gummi-Tarzan* (1975) are vastly different texts with regard to subject matter, style, and tone. At first glance, the clearest commonalities between the two texts might be that both have a young male protagonist and both prominently feature witchcraft. *Gummi-Tarzan* is – at face value – a light-hearted yet also downbeat text, aimed at early readers, with a contemporary setting and about a boy who is teased for being physically weak. Through an alliance with a witch he happens to encounter, the boy finds a way to reverse his fortunes, at least temporarily. *Heksefeber*, meanwhile, is a short historical novel in which a boy, having seen his mother burned at the stake for witchcraft, must begin a new life.

The contrast is visible in the illustrations too: the humour of *Gummi-Tarzan* is magnified by the author’s playfully drawn illustrations, while the generally bleak tone of *Heksefeber* is enhanced by Mads Stage’s evocative and skilfully integrated

sketches, with a threatening portrayal of nature that was quite atypical of illustrations in most Danish children's literature up until that point.¹

The texts could also appear to contrast each other thematically. *Heksefeber* embraces heroism, whereas *Gummi-Tarzan* appears to focus on antiheroism. These two concepts are ostensibly opposed, but since the main difference lies purely in the relative presence or absence of heroism, these themes could perhaps be regarded as two sides of the same coin. An analysis of this point of contact may shed more light on shifting models or socio-cultural understandings of heroism, while also showing a way in which traditional conventions have been subverted in literature for young people.

I first encountered these texts on Bjarne Thorup Thomsen's course dedicated to Scandinavian Literature for Children and Young People, alongside many other classic works, from Gretha Stevns' [Eilif Mortansson's] *Susy Rødtop* (1943) and Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Långstrump* (1945) to Thorbjørn Egner's *Folk og røvere i Kardemomme by* (1955), Klaus Rifbjerg's *Kesses krig* (1982), and Torill Thorstad Hauger's *Rævnejenta* (1989). The present chapter is an updated and expanded version of an essay I wrote for that course, as a fourth-year undergraduate student, in 2005–06. With Bjarne's clear course design, coupled with his inclusive approach to students and to the subject matter at hand, that course transformed my understanding of literature, and I am sure many other former students would say the same.

The course also demonstrated the high quality of writing for children and young adults in the Nordic region, which is in no small part tied to the enormous care and thought that goes into the production of children's literature in those countries, as well as the fact the target age group is taken seriously, perhaps

1. Glistrup 1992: 130.

more so than in many other parts of the world. For a complex of social and educational reasons, Nordic authors and illustrators have over many decades shown a tendency not to underestimate children and to show children and young adults great respect as readers. The two primary texts to be considered here are, to my mind, fascinating examples of this trend. Although *Heksefeber* is still quite a didactic text, it tackles a dark period of history with great sensitivity, while *Gummi-Tarzan* is a subversive expression of solidarity with the oppressed, showing that there is more than one way to be heroic.

Both texts were published in the mid-1970s, in a decade that saw a huge transformation of social attitudes in Denmark, as in many other parts of the world. A wave of politically engaged activism sought to confront long-established power structures in the home, in education, and indeed across society. Many authors of books for children and young adults took on the task of expressing these ideological perspectives to young readers and providing new alternatives to the outdated viewpoints found in many older works, thereby highlighting the role of literature in reflecting, discussing, informing, or even shaping contemporary values. This is most obvious in realist texts tackling social issues in up-to-date settings, such as Bent Haller's *Katamaranen* (1976), which caused considerable controversy at the time of its publication. Ideological messages can, however, be found in all genres, from historical novels such as *Heksefeber* to humoristic texts such as *Gummi-Tarzan*, both of which are characteristic of their time in their problematisation of authority. In *Heksefeber*, this critique of authority emerges primarily in relation to the historically situated subject matter, albeit with clear parallels to contemporary debates. *Gummi-Tarzan*, meanwhile, is significant in challenging the authority associated with traditional understandings of heroism.

Quantifying and qualifying heroism (and antiheroism)

In order to consider the themes effectively, an understanding is needed of what is signified by the terms *heroism* and *antiheroism*, and how these ideas have been contemplated in the past.

One of the best-known general works on heroism is Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, originally published in 1949 and revised and expanded in a 1968 second edition. Campbell applied the techniques of psychoanalysis to the study of myths, folk tales, and legends, although he generally conflated these as *myth*. This conflation of narrative types is among the many points in Campbell's analysis that have been criticised by others, such as folklorist Alan Dundes, who also posited that the purported universality of Campbell's approach has been complicit in the dilution of folklore studies.² Dundes referred to Gregory Hansen, who had lamented the blurred borders of folklore now encompassing 'topics ranging from letters in *Penthouse Forum* to washing dishes in Denmark'.³ It is not my intention to suggest that *Heksefeber* or *Gummi-Tarzan* are necessarily artefacts of folklore in that sense. While fully recognising the valid criticisms of Campbell's work, not least from the perspective of folklorists, I look to Campbell's work for its insights on the concept of heroism. It is useful in this regard, in spite of its other defects, precisely because of its wide readership and hence close relationship with popular understanding of what constitutes heroism in tales (or 'myth'), as this is ultimately a socio-cultural construct. Furthermore, *Gummi-Tarzan* is in some respects a striking counter-example

2. Dundes 2005.

3. Hansen 1997: 99.

to Campbell's analysis, demonstrating sharply how heroism has traditionally been defined through hegemonic power structures, while also challenging Jungian archetype models.

In what could be seen as a consolidation of Freudian and Jungian ideas, Campbell claimed that, if dreams are 'symptomatic of the dynamics of the psyche', then 'myth' is a representation of the shared dreams of an entire society, with symbols that are readily identifiable by all, deriving from the collective unconscious.⁴ Campbell considered heroism to be a major recurring theme present in the folk tales and legends of all cultures.

Central to Campbell's treatment of what he called the monomyth are archetypes, which possibly constitute the oldest, most instinctive, and most thoroughly cross-cultural *topoi*.⁵ Campbell points out that his focus on archetypes was certainly not new, attributing the major development of the subject to Carl Gustav Jung.⁶ Jung, in turn, had borrowed the term from writers of antiquity such as Cicero and Pliny, and he acknowledged the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, amongst others, on this 'theory of preconscious, primordial ideas'.⁷ Archetypes are fundamentally various standard categories of characters that appear to be instantly recognisable as fulfilling a particular role, as if prior familiarity with these characters were innate to all humans. In terms of their preconscious nature, Nietzsche had suggested that many frequently occurring conclusions drawn in modern-day dreams are the same as those that 'for many millennia mankind also drew *when awake*'.⁸ Dundes describes

4. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 237.

5. The word *monomyth* was coined by James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* (1939: 581). For Campbell, it refers to the idea that all 'myths' follow a single pattern.

6. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 16–18, n. 18.

7. Jung 1938: 64, 122 n. 12.

8. Nietzsche 1996 [1878]: 18.

Campbell's 'insistence on the existence of archetypes' to be the 'most disturbing' aspect of his analysis.⁹ In the present study, the focus is on heroism as a theme, not on archetypes.

One possible, while somewhat broad, understanding of the term *hero* would see it as referring to the main character of any given work of literature, art, drama, or film. The endowment of a character with the *hero* title should, however, be treated with care, as not all main characters embody qualities identifiable with heroism. Although such a common equation of *hero* with *protagonist* is a simplification of the hero's role, it does reveal the frequent centrality of the hero character. If the tale being told is the hero's own tale, the hero is inevitably paramount as a character; furthermore, the placing of the hero at the hub of events or the focalised telling of the tale from the hero's point of view can create a clearer emotional focus for the tale's intended audience. If a hero – or, for that matter, any protagonist – is to be a good role model, empathy and identification with them are key. A good way to facilitate such compassion can be through radiating the story out from the hero. Character-centric storytelling is, indeed, as typical of most of the children's literature of the twentieth century as it is of classic folk tales.

The definition of heroism that will be preferred in this investigation will be that which represents the coming together of well-regarded qualities, values, and character traits in one person, making them into a figure revered by a certain group. Antiheroism, on the other hand, will be considered to be the profound lack of heroic qualities displayed by an individual. Pinning down these heroic qualities themselves could prove problematic. After all, every society can value different personal merits, and it only takes a brief look at modern history to realise that one society's enemy, embodying all its fears

9. Dundes 2005: 397.

and nightmares, can be another society's hero, fulfilling that society's every hope and dream. Crucially, the selection of which traits are considered heroic is also highly conditioned by hegemonic narratives and power structures in society, a fact that is problematised in *Gummi-Tarzan*, as will be seen below.

Shifting historical narratives of heroism and morality

In a comparative study of national heroes in Scotland, Norway, and Lithuania, Linas Eriksonas outlined the significant role played by hero figures, such as William Wallace, St Olav, or Vytautas the Great, in reinforcing national identities. Eriksonas argues that the foundation of national heroic traditions took place in the last years of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, at a time when humanism and the Reformation were making an impact.¹⁰ Although there are many cases where national and religious narratives of heroism clearly overlap, the national heroic traditions may provide an alternative to, for instance, the Christian heroic tradition of sainthood. With the influence of humanism, many tales lost Christian moralising elements that had gradually been injected into the original texts over the centuries.¹¹

The texts to be examined here are both Danish, and Denmark does share with Iceland, Norway, and Sweden a common Norse mythological tradition. If such a tradition is taken to embody deep-seated cultural ideals and aspirations, it might be assumed that these countries share similar historical notions of heroism. Indeed, the sagas already provided a template of sorts for glorification of heroes.¹² In addition to national or

10. Eriksonas 2004: 295.

11. Ibid.: 301–302.

12. Ibid.: 303.

regional factors, however, the aspirations of any given society will often vary over time. The morals and ideals of the 1970s, when the two texts under consideration were both written, were particular to that decade, and differed in many respects from principles of the sagas. Some traits may, however, have survived over the centuries, or may even have been resurrected at that time.

In 1840, long before Joseph Campbell first put pen to paper, the Scottish mathematician and historian Thomas Carlyle's collection of six lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* was published, which Eriksonas describes as 'the first attempt to come to grips with the heroic in the modern moral-philosophical terms'.¹³ In the chapter on 'The Hero as Divinity', Carlyle examines Norse mythology, concluding that its true essence lies in the 'recognition of the divineness of Nature'.¹⁴ While generalising, Carlyle claims that the sincerity of the Scandinavian appreciation of nature is notable:

I feel that these old Northmen were looking into Nature with open eye and soul: most earnest, honest; childlike, and yet manlike; with a great-hearted simplicity and depth and freshness, in a true, loving, admiring, unfeared way.¹⁵

Alan Dundes criticised Campbell as 'a throwback to nineteenth-century theories of psychic unity'.¹⁶ Perhaps we see such a notion represented in Carlyle's words here, and this kind of attention towards the natural world is by no means unique to the Scandinavian mythological tradition. Still, this aspect that Carlyle highlighted clearly resonates in the portrayal of nature

13. Ibid.: 32.

14. Carlyle 1840: 27.

15. Ibid.: 28.

16. Dundes 2005: 396.

in *Heksefeber*. The character of Hans, to be examined presently, has a relationship with nature that places great emphasis on respect. In return for this respect – especially evident in his veneration of the fjord and his friendship with a fox, not to mention his knowledge of the properties of plants – nature will respect him: ‘*Du må lære at respektere den [fjorden]. Så vil den også respektere dig.*’¹⁷ (‘You must learn to respect it [the fjord]. Then it will also respect you.’)¹⁸

Although this reverence for the natural world is seen as the devil’s work by many members of the local community depicted in the book, Andersen portrays such a relationship with nature in a positive light, so while this is an ideal emblematic of the conservationist movement that was expanding in the 1970s, perhaps *Heksefeber* also shows a return in some way to what Carlyle interpreted, rightly or wrongly, as a moral standard of Nordic antiquity. The apparent opposition of these ideals with those of the church, in the setting of the book, effectively demonstrates an alternative moral code no longer based on religious dogma but rather on respect for, if not the beatification of, nature.

Masculinity, morality, and language

Traditional and stereotypical gender roles are a significant aspect of many myths, legends, and tales. In such tales, as in reality, heroism is certainly not a purely masculine domain. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, for example, has challenged popular misconceptions of the portrayal of women in mythology.¹⁹ Still, bearing in mind the power structures inherent in the definition of heroism,

17. Andersen 1974 [1973]: 17.

18. Andersen 1976: 15.

19. Estés 2004: lvi–lviii.

it is perhaps no coincidence that Campbell continually refers to the nameless hero as if 'he' were masculine. Strength is a stereotypical indicator of masculinity, and physical strength is often depicted in mythology as indicative of moral strength.²⁰ This resonates with the depiction of Hans in *Heksefeber*, who is known as *Store-Hans* ('Big Hans') for his physical presence, but sometimes also as *Kloge-Hans* ('Wise Hans').²¹

The treatment of gender roles in *Gummi-Tarzan* has a substantial impact on the morality of the text, and this is also typical of its era. Kirkegaard confronts stereotypes of masculinity when the protagonist, Ivan Olsen, does not want to live up to his father's ideal of how a 'real man' should behave. Herr Olsen idolises the character first brought to fame as the protagonist of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), but his son pokes fun at the first drawing he is shown of Tarzan, asking why he is sitting in a tree and why he is only wearing a loincloth, as well as suggesting that Tarzan looks a little overweight, notions that enrage Ivan's father.²²

Ivan Olsen's profound lack of physical strength for most of the narrative marks him out as decidedly antiheroic in a traditional sense. However, in a period when the gender roles of men were being redefined following breakthroughs for the feminist movement, other manifestations were becoming possible. Indeed, the challenge to the patriarchy is not only represented by Ivan but also by a woman: the witch herself.²³ Arguably Ivan's greatest triumph is the wish he comes up with for the witch to satisfy:

20. Kirkham and Thumim 1993: 15.

21. Andersen 1974 [1973]: 13; Andersen 1976: 11.

22. Kirkegaard 1975: 33. For more on the origins of the Tarzan character, see Morton 1993: 106–107.

23. Waage 2004: 100.

Jeg vil ønske mig, at alle mine ønsker kan gå i opfyldelse,' råbte Ivan Olsen.²⁴

'I wish for **all my wishes to come true,**' yelled Ivan Olsen.

This instance of brain over brawn shows where Ivan's true strength lies: in original thought rather than in brute force.

The protagonist also struggles to read, and the portrayal of these trials may hint at dyslexia. This is intriguing when considering the intended audience of *Gummi-Tarzan*, who may well be dealing with similar challenges. The subdued tone of the text, while still humorous, rewards readers without patronising them. Other satisfying rewards for the reader come in the form of expressive interjections such as 'arhh', 'næhh', 'æhh', and 'jahh', which are used to superb effect, and in the extensive use of text within the illustrations. Indeed, the way illustrations are integrated into the narrative makes for a powerful multimodal text.²⁵ More subtle techniques are also used to engage early readers, such as bold text, and inter-punct hyphenation points between elements of compound nouns. Books such as this may indeed be a milestone in the hero's journey of many a child learning to read.

Another of Ivan's heroic features, which could again be interpreted as a product of the time the text was written, is the very fact that he challenges the status quo, questioning both established gender and educational conventions. His extraordinary perceptiveness, objectivity, and nonchalance are also quite unusual attributes for a child, as is his incredible tolerance. Ivan puts up with being bullied both at home and at school, but he does not let that dishearten him. This tolerance and nonchalance when it comes to being bullied are, however,

24. Kirkegaard 1975: 70. Emphasis in original.

25. Hennig 2012.

of questionable value to him. Nevertheless, Ivan is certainly a character to be admired.

The hero's journey in *Heksefeber*

Joseph Campbell's investigation of the monomyth places particular emphasis on its structure. He claims that the hero's adventure, or the hero's journey, follows a standard cyclical pattern in all tales.²⁶ Although it could be argued that this model is too elaborate because it would be a tall order to include every single one of its multitude of possible narrative situations in one tale – from such incidents as battling a dragon and being swallowed by a whale to a crucifixion or an elixir theft – it is important to bear in mind what Campbell wrote about variations of the monomyth:

The changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description. Many tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle [...], others string a number of independent cycles into a single series [...]. Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes.²⁷

If the idea of these cycles is applied to the texts in question, it becomes clear that the hero's adventure in *Heksefeber* is incomplete. Esben, the young protagonist, flees the scene of his mother's execution in what could be termed a *call to adventure*.²⁸ This was Campbell's term for the 'first stage of the mythological

26. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 227–228.

27. Ibid.: 228.

28. Ibid.: 45–54.

journey'.²⁹ Destiny has placed Esben in this situation. In his failure to prevent his mother from being burned at the stake, he essentially feels challenged by the local society to stand up for the values his mother stood for. His mother's problems all began when she was blamed for the death of a girl with pulmonary tuberculosis she had not been able to heal.³⁰ While his mother may have had an unusual aptitude for healing the sick, Esben knows that this is because she knew how to make use of natural remedies, not due to any evil powers, and that the girl who had died was already too ill to heal.

Esben's encounter with Hans is where his adventure really begins in earnest. Hans helps him to get accustomed to a new way of life and develop both physically and morally, but his training comes to an abrupt end when Hans is taken away by a group of men from the village for the same reason Esben's mother had first been suspected of witchcraft: a dying man was taken to Hans for healing when it was already too late.³¹ In one of the many instances of premonition in this novel, Hans already knew that 'they' would come for him as they came for Esben's mother. Abduction is one of the events that can lead to the *crossing of the first threshold*, where the main act of the hero's adventure begins.³² Here Esben is forced to face the *threshold guardians*, that is to say the men who already took away his mother, 'at the entrance to the zone of magnified power'.³³ Following this brief confrontation, Esben takes flight, and the end of the book thus mirrors the very beginning. Here his trials will begin as he takes on the role of the solitary outsider, as Hans had done before, and the knowledge passed on to him

29. Ibid.: 53.

30. Andersen 1974 [1973]: 24–25.

31. Ibid.: 76–77.

32. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 71–82.

33. Ibid.: 71.

from Hans will surely stand him in good stead for the hard times ahead.

As for what form the apex of his adventure may take, the most obvious probability, following Campbell's schema, would seem to be *atonement with the father*.³⁴ It is commonplace in myth and folk tales, as in literature, for the destiny of the protagonist to be inexorably linked to their genetics.

*Jeg har ikke nogen far. Jeg har i hvert fald aldrig set ham, og mor har aldrig fortalt mig om ham.*³⁵

I have no father. Anyhow, I've never seen him and Mother has never said anything about him to me.³⁶

Esben clearly does not know who his biological father is, although Hans has been an excellent substitute in that role. Already having known his mother, Esben may need to find out about his father if he is to understand fully who he truly is:

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. [...] He beholds the face of the father, understands – and the two are atoned.³⁷

This coming to terms with who he is, 'beholding the face of the father' and realising that face – at least to some degree – to be his own, is essential to an understanding of cruelty. Excluding

34. Ibid.: 116–137.

35. Andersen 1974 [1973]: 24.

36. Andersen 1976: 20.

37. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 135.

the possibility that Hans is Esben's biological father, Esben may need to confront his father before being able to triumph. If his father is still alive, maybe he is one of the villagers who stoned Esben's mother on the pyre, which would certainly provide an interesting treatise on the theme of being one's own enemy.

The hero's journey in *Gummi-Tarzan*

In *Gummi-Tarzan*, the reader is party to a more complete hero's adventure. Ivan Olsen's lack of physical strength means he is sidelined in most social situations: at school, at home, on the football pitch, and on the street where older boys participate in long-distance spitting contests. His *call to adventure* comes when he has a chance encounter with a witch.

An interesting contrast between the two protagonists is the different reactions they have when they first encounter their *mentors*, and how this relates to fear. Fear is a theme common to both texts, with the word *bange* ('afraid, frightened, scared') appearing frequently throughout them. Overcoming or conquering fear is indeed connected to valour, one of the cornerstones of traditional heroism. This is highlighted by Thomas Carlyle, who clearly seems to associate it with masculinity too: 'The first duty for a man is still that of subduing *Fear*.'³⁸ Esben is at first scared of Hans, although his traumatic recent experiences certainly contributed to his fear, as we later find out that Esben is, in fact, extremely courageous. Ivan, on the other hand, is not scared of the witch at all. This is a break with convention.³⁹ It may, however, be more a result of his general nonchalance than genuine courage:

38. Carlyle 1840: 29. Emphasis in original.

39. Alfarnes 1998: 27.

*Jeg er bange for buksevand og næseblod og al den slags. Men jeg er ikke bange for dig.*⁴⁰

I'm afraid of getting water poured down my pants and nosebleeds and all that stuff. But I'm not afraid of you.

His attitude does nevertheless greatly impress the witch, and it is because of this that she challenges him to come up with a wish. This challenge could be considered the first of the *hero's trials*, if Ivan is to be deemed a hero.⁴¹ After having his wish fulfilled, Ivan proceeds to face other tests: long-distance target spitting, cycling, playing football, and reading an enormous book, all of which he excels in. During his extraordinary day of adventure, Ivan also seeks atonement with his father and confronts him, making him experience what it is like to have a nosebleed after falling from a tree.

Like Esben, Ivan also undergoes a physical transformation, but this development is merely a temporary one; the next day, Ivan's torment continues as if nothing had happened at all. It is unclear whether the events of the previous day were just a dream. Although that would seem the most plausible case, there was still a black mark on the grass where the witch had placed her cauldron, allowing for ambiguity.⁴² Whether it was a dream or a supernatural experience, however, matters very little. As the adventure only affected Ivan himself, the ending provides no salvation, no *elixir* for Ivan or for society. This is the greatest deviation from the classic hero's journey: it was all apparently to no avail. Instead of a hero's journey proper, Ivan's adventure is more of an antihero's day off.

In an interview published in the year of his death, Kirkegaard made clear that it was a conscious aim in much

40. Kirkegaard 1975: 62.

41. Campbell 2004 [1968]: 89–100.

42. Kirkegaard 1975: 121.

of his writing to react against hero worship and instead to create antiheroes.⁴³ Still, through its laconic use of irony, the book's anti-authoritarianism points at other kinds of inner strength that may outlast Ivan's extraordinary day.⁴⁴ The author himself stated that a consistent aim in his work was to show solidarity with children, whom he described as a '*mindretalsgruppe*' ('minority group').⁴⁵ An anti-authoritarian stance can often be seen as heroic regardless of the outcome, and Ivan's rejection of traditional, normative imperatives of masculinity may offer an alternative type of heroic accomplishment in its promotion of a more nuanced understanding of male roles.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the hero's adventure in *Heksefeber* is incomplete, it would certainly appear to be leading to a life of heroism for Esben. This is aided by the strong presence of a mentor, whereas the witch in *Gummi-Tarzan* is but a momentary helper for Ivan. If only she were always there to help Ivan, every day would be heroic for him. All the same, Ivan displays several admirable and original attributes, not least his anti-authoritarian sensibilities, that make him into a remarkable modern-day hero-antihero hybrid, in stark contrast to the more traditional or historical hero figure represented by Esben. It must also be remembered that Ivan succeeded in all his tasks, and Campbell considered such trials to be the deciding factor as to whether or not a character qualified as a hero.⁴⁶

43. Gormsen 1979: 222.

44. Alfarnes 1998: 28–30.

45. Cited in Gormsen 1979: 231.

46. Campbell with Moyers 1988: 154.

The average complexity of such aspects as narrative, plot structure, tone, and focalisation in children's fiction has long been on the increase, not to mention the more indistinct boundaries between genres.⁴⁷ In her work on 'fantastic tales' in Danish children's literature, Anna Karlskov Skyggebjerg has shown how works such as *Gummi-Tarzan* draw on pre-texts to produce what John Stephens and Robyn McCallum call 're-versions'.⁴⁸ Skyggebjerg justifiably argues that in Danish children's literature this widespread intertextuality enriches the genre by playfully challenging and upending pre-texts and literary conventions. The examples above support this view with reference to extremely deep-seated cultural conventions embodied in the hero's journey. In particular, it so happens that the structural template of the hero's journey reveals similarities with the journey of an antihero in *Gummi-Tarzan*. By subverting this convention, Ivan Olsen's valiant challenge to more stereotypical ideals of masculinity illuminates how some generally accepted concepts of heroism can be heavily influenced by inherited and outmoded power structures, to the extent that they may directly mirror these structures. In turn, this questions some of the traditionally conceived archetypes discussed by Campbell, showing that they may include internalised socio-cultural notions based on imbalances of power.

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47. Nikolajeva 1998.

48. Skyggebjerg 2005: 291; Stephens and McCallum 1998.

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