# Come Here, Come Home
## An Analysis of the No-Name Story Pattern in Middle Grade Novels and How it Can Be Used to Amplify Family.

Caitlin Kroot
5914361
BA Thesis English Language and Culture
7.5 EC

Abstract

This paper discusses the no-name story pattern and how it functions in middle grade children's novels. The pattern is characterized by the appearance of three stages in novels, the home stage, the away stage, and the second home stage. This paper focusses on three novels written in 2018, *Boy Underwater*, *The House with Chicken Legs*, and *The Storm Keeper's Island*. It compares the novels to the no-name story pattern and discusses how this pattern emphasises the role of family. Furthermore, it tries to explain the role of non-traditional families in these novels and how this influences the perceptions of the reader.

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## Introduction

What sets children's literature apart from other types of literature is that its intended audience is not its primary customer (Nodelman and Reimer 14). Roger Sales states that everyone thinks that they know what children's literature is until they have to define it (1). Books written for and targeted towards children should have something of interest for adults as well. Jill May states that this is what makes it more challenging to define the genre, since it

is read by both children and adults (21). Zohar Shavit agrees with May and states that children's literature deals with two implied readers, "a pseudo addressee [, which is the child,] and a real one. The child, the official reader of the text, is not meant to realize it fully and is much more an excuse for the text rather than its genuine addressee" (21). These texts ask for a repertoire that children do not have access to (21). However, with age this repertoire will grow. This might cause the addressees to merge at a certain stage in childhood. Therefore this might not be the best explanation of the problem considering the definition of children's literature. Young children access their literature primarily through their caregivers. "Many adults assume that children should read primarily to learn" (22) the meanings of texts and vocabulary. Furthermore, adults generally focus on the messages a text might bring across (22). This suggests that adults expect children's literature to include an educational aspect, in the form of broadening a child's vocabulary, as well as a message. These aspects receive the main focus of most adults, rather than the pleasure a story might provide to a child. However, as Nodelman and Mavis conclude, adults have a hard time defining what children will find enjoyable (23). Therefore the educational aspect may simply be easier to define and receive more thought and discussion.

Throughout the years, researchers have given various definitions for children's literature. Coats agrees with Nodelman and Reimer, and says that children's literature has emerged because adults consider children to be different from themselves. Coats elaborates on this and states that children still need special care in order to be prepared for adulthood (14). However, children's literature can be defined by more than its educational value. Marah Gubar provides more possible definitions: she suggests "literature read by young people" (209), "anything that appears on a publisher-designated children's [list]" (209), and statesthat "children's literature consists of literature written for children" (209). She concludes by saying that children's literature would be better left undefined, because insisting on children's literature as a genre with recurring traits will damage the field. According to her it would

limit the development of children's literature (210). Nodelman and Reimer agree and state that the limitations in children's literature are caused by assumptions authors make about children (188). With this, they present one of the dangers of making assumptions about children. Nodelman and Reimer suggest that authors should not have their intended audience in mind while writing since it will limit the literary development of the child. Other researchers focus on the differences between novels written for children and novels written for adults, for example Charlotte Huck. She states that this difference does not lie in the quality of writing, nor the depth of the expressed emotion, but that it is in the "choice of subject matter" (467). While these criteria provide some insight into the elements children's literature contain, they are divided on most characteristics. Children's literature lacks a definition on which critics all agree. Therefore this paper will use one of the definitions of children's literature by Gubar. Children's literature will be defined as any novel marketed towards children. This is the definition that is most commonly used. However, it hands all influence to the publishers and is therefore in no way a correct definition. Since this paper focusses on middle grade novels, the definition will be limited to novels with eight to twelve-year-old protagonists.

Children's literature for older children is often divided into two age groups, middle grade and young adult. Middle grade literature is targeted towards an audience of eight to twelve-years-olds, the preteens. Young adult literature is aimed at a slightly older audience, twelve to seventeen-year-olds, who are going through puberty (Lo). Maria Nikolajeva states that young adult and middle grade novels turn the adult-dominated world around and allow children to be in charge of this new world (70). Middle grade novels "offer reassurances, […], that the world is a safe place that makes sense" (71). Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer state that these novels often include a similar pattern, the no-name story[1] pattern, more

1 This type of story is called the no-name story since it is "generic, like the 'no-name' canned goods sold in supermarkets" (Nodelman and Reimer 189).

commonly known as the home-away-home pattern (188; Coats 71). This pattern is a basic framework to which many children's novels, regardless of their age group, adhere. The details for most novels differ, but there is a basic pattern which underlies nearly all novels. This pattern is described by Nodelman and Reimer as

> A young creature, an animal or an object with human characteristics, enjoys the security of a comfortable home until something happens to make it unhappy. The small creature leaves home and has exciting adventures. But the adventures turn out to be as dangerous or as discomforting as they are thrilling. Having learned the truth about the big world, the creature finally returns to the security it at first found burdensome, concluding that, despite its constraints, home is best. (Nodelman and Reimer 189)

Nodelman and Reimer put their view in perspective by stating that there are children's novels that do not follow this particular pattern and that some do not resemble it at all (190).

In most middle grade children's novels, children of roughly the same age as the intended audience play major roles, since the novels are meant to "relate to the interests of children" (192; Lo). This means that theprotagonists leave the safety of their homes to go on an adventure. The adventure might be a real adventure or an adventure in which they get to know themselves better. After this they return back home with more knowledge about themselves or their close friends or family. The no-name story pattern may be reversed as well: "Instead of having a child leave home to confront danger, they describe a child's bedroom or home invaded by something that clearly belongs elsewhere" (Nodelman and Reimer 190). In the inversed no-name story pattern the story starts with the main character going home and having an adventure there and it ends with them leaving their home again. Both types of the no-name story pattern often underline the meaning of having a home or finding a new one because of the cycle they contain (192). These stories revolve around the homes of these children. In the regular no-name story pattern, the children consistently return home from their adventures. Even though Nodelman and Reimer advise against it, authors

often write with the intended audience in mind. This suggests that authors find it important for the reader to know about the safety of home.

This paper will provide a close reading and comparison of three novels, namely *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018) by Catherine Doyle, *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018), by Sophie Anderson, and *Boy Underwater* (2018) by Adam Baron. It will also apply literary theory to the novels. These three novels were chosen because of their reception: all three novels score over four stars on goodreads.com,[2] 4.39, 4.09, and 4.19 respectively (Goodreads, "Storm"; Goodreads, "House"; Goodreads, "Boy"), which suggests that they are well received in their genre. Furthermore, they are also chosen based on the year of their publication, all novels chosen were published in 2018. Additionally, the authors of these novels are either from the United Kingdom or Ireland, in an attempt to rule out larger cultural differences. Which also indicates that the novels are not translated from another language, meaning that they are analysed in the language of their original publication. In addition, all novels are so-called stand alones[3], meaning that they are not part of a series. Most writers for children write books in series (Nodelman and Reimer 186), but this might lead to the no-name pattern being shattered between several books. All novels exhibit the no-name story pattern and discuss non-traditional family structures. However, this was not a factor in the decision for the novels. And lastly, the novels were all marketed towards the middle grade age group of eight to twelve-year-olds.

This paper will show how Nodelman and Reimer's no-name story pattern appears in the three middle grade novels and how it highlights family in contemporary middle grade

2 Goodreads is a website that allows its users to catalogue the books they have read and want to read. Furthermore, it lets its users write reviews and rate the books they have read based on a five star system. All novels have rather high ratings, which could mean that they are a good representation of middle grade as a genre.

3 This paper was written before Catherine Doyle announced that *The Storm Keeper's Island* would get a sequel.

novels. With this, this paper will show the function that the no-name story pattern has in amplifying different family structures.

# Chapter 1 – *Boy Underwater* (2018) by Adam Baron

## 1.1 *Boy Underwater* (2018)

*Boy Underwater* tells the story of nine-year-old Cymbeline Igloo. He lives together with his mother in south-east London. The novel discusses the first time Cymbeline will go swimming with his class. Most children Cymbeline's age can swim. However, Cymbeline's mother has never taken him swimming so he cannot. When this swimming lesson results in Cymbeline nearly drowning, his mother comes to school and starts screaming at some of his peers. After the incident his mother disappears and Cymbeline has to go and live with his aunt. He tries to find out what happened to his mother and uncovers a family secret on that journey. At first, it seems logical that the boy underwater, as is the title of the novel, is Cymbeline. However, later on in the novel it becomes clear that it can refer to both Cymbeline as well as his little brother who drowned.

## 1.2 The No-Name Pattern in *Boy Underwater* (2018)

There are several safe environments for Cymbeline that make for the first home part of the story. School is the first of these, it functions as a familiar environment for Cymbeline. He has several friends there and engages in after school activities such as football. At school he encounters an antagonist named Billy. The biggest rivalry between the two of them is due to their competitive nature, they constantly compete to be the best at sports (6). However, Billy forms no threat to Cymbeline's security at school. Cymbeline's home functions as the second safe environment in this story. He lives there with his mother and they have a

relatively strong bond. Cymbeline notes that he knows about the financial problems they are in. When his mother disappears he is willing to do everything in his power to bring his mother back home, even if it means that he has to go out in the dark while he has never "been out on [his] own in the daylight, let alone at night" (Baron 128).

The away part of the novel is characterised by a series of unfamiliar environments as well as experiences, it covers the larger part of the novel. The novel starts at the swimming pool. Baron illustrates the unfamiliarity of this environment for Cymbeline by underlining some characteristics of the swimming pool: "the first thing I noticed was the smell. Tangy, in my nose. Then the sound. As soon as Miss Phillips pushed the door of the leisure centre open I could hear it: loud and echoey and not quite real, laughter and voices and a hosepipe going, a phone ringing" (20). This shows not only the unfamiliarity, but Cymbeline's discomfort as well. This feeling continues when Cymbeline notes that "[his] stomach lurched" (21), and that "sweat prickled on [his] forehead" (21). These signs of discomfort and unfamiliarity illustrate the sudden change from home to away.

The pool is the first in a series of away environments. Shortly after the swimming class, Cymbeline's mother is taken to a mental hospital. Cymbeline is unable to go back to his familiar environment because of this and has to move in with his aunt for the time being (72). During his stay thereCymbeline learns about his aunt's family and that theyturn out not to be the perfect family he always thought they were. This environment causes him to feel lonely (90).

The final part of the novel takes the reader back to the swimming pool. While at first the swimming pool was an unfamiliar environment for Cymbeline, now it is a secure place for him (232). All events in the story make Cymbeline realise how lucky he was with his situation before his mother was taken to the hospital, it makes him realise what he has lost. After his mother returns home, Cymbeline moves back home. He has discovered the reason for his mother's sudden departure, and "learned the truth about the big world" (Nodelman and Reimer 189). This truth is, in this case, a large family secret. Cymbeline's mother and her

sister both fell for the same man, which is the reason why they often fight. Cymbeline's mother married him and they had two children. However, Cymbeline's little brother drowned in a lake. This incident caused his father and mother to split up as well as his mother to lie about his father's death. After Cymbeline finds out about this, the situation at home changes. Cymbeline's father stops by during the weekends to "see [Cymbeline] and take [him] out" (Baron 237). Baron suggests that Cymbeline's mother has found a new boyfriend who stops by often (244). By temporarily losing his mother, Cymbeline has learned "the value of home" (Nodelman and Reimer 197).

Family plays a large role in *Boy Underwater* (2018). Cymbeline is willing to do everything to get his mother back home when she disappears. However, he also helps his aunt and uncle to get back together. Cymbeline has grown up during the novel, he is less dependent on his mother. Furthermore, his family has shared the history of their family with him. The story adheres to Nodelman and Reimer's pattern, but is as much a coming-of-age story as a no-name story since it deals with Cymbeline maturing to a certain extent.

The no-name pattern illustrates the importance of home and family in this novel. All stages in the pattern involve family, his mother's house in the first home stage, his aunt and uncle's house at the away stage, and finally his mother's house again at the second home stage. The no-name story pattern often lets the main character return home with a "new and better understanding of what both home and oneself are and should be" (Nodelman and Reimer 198). Many children's novels consider children that are permanently or temporarily separated from their parents (197), *Boy Underwater* shows this as well. This separation "seems to relate to a central concern adults have with children's independence and security" (197).When taking into account what Nodelman and Reimer state, that children's novels are mostly written for the implied reader, one may assume that authors think it important for children to learn about home. These homes to which they often return may include their family, suggesting an important role for family dynamics in children's literature. This role can

be seen in *Boy Underwater*, with Cymbeline returning to his family. Not only Cymbeline returns home, his aunt and father do as well (Baron 242). With this, Baron shows the importance and influence of family love. When taking into consideration the concern of adults about children's security, it is logical that the child will return home, into a safe environment which is controlled by adults. Children's novels often set an example for the behaviour of its reader. Therefore the reader may learn about the importance of their home.

## Chapter 2 – *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018) by Sophie Anderson

### 2.1 *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018)

*The House with Chicken Legs* (2018) tells the story of Marinka, a twelve-year-old girl who, similarly to Cymbeline in *Boy Underwater*, grows up in a non-traditional family. She lives with her grandmother in a house with chicken legs. It is likely to be set in a Slavic fantasy world since it deals with Baba Yaga, a character that often appears in Slavic folktales. Furthermore, it also refers to typical Slavic cuisine, to kvass (Anderson 13) and borsch (15). Baba Yaga is often referred to as "the witch from Slavic fairy tales" (Oleszkiewicz-Peralba 7). She is likely to be a pre-Slavic goddess of death and rebirth who has been converted into the witch she is today due to socio-economic factors (7). Baba Yaga dwells between the living and the death and assists the dead to the world of the dead, she is on the threshold

between life and death. The traditional Yaga would live in the woods, but in the case of *The House with Chicken Legs* the house moves around on its chicken legs, hence the title. Marinka dislikes the lifestyle of the Yaga, since it means that she is unable to stay anywhere long enough to make friends. Furthermore, Marinka is destined to become the next Yaga since she is the descendant of a Yaga. The Yaga houses, with all their responsibilities, stay in the family.

2.2 The No-Name Pattern in *The House With Chicken Legs* (2018)

Marinka's safe environment is her home, the house with chicken legs. Every day she builds a fence made of bones which surrounds her house in order to "keep out the living and guide the dead" (Anderson 9). Since the fence keeps out the living and her house moves around on its chicken legs, Marinka lives a solitary life which she detests. However, her house protects her from the outside world since its fence keeps out the living who can be cruel about Yaga. Marinka is confronted with this cruelty when she goes to the market and is told that she "[looks] like the ugly witch who lives in that rotten old house" (Anderson 170). Furthermore, the house keeps her alive as well. As Marinka discovers towards the end of the novel, she is a spirit herself. When she died in a fire, her spirit refused to leave to the world of the dead. Marinka's house feeds her energy and keeps her alive.

Family is a persistent presence in this novel. Marinka's home is with her grandmother. In one of the first paragraphs Marinka asks Baba to tell a story about her parents, "'Which one would you like to hear?' 'How they met'" (Anderson 21). Marinka likes the story about her parents' first encounter best since "although [her] mother broke the Yaga rules […] nothing bad happened because of it" (Anderson 24). This tale makes Marinka wonder whether her own actions will receive any punishment. The absence of her parents finds its way into her future as a Yaga as well since Marinka thinks her parents were Yaga. Yaga houses are inherited by descendants and Marinka is supposed to inherit the house with chicken legs: "if [Marinka's] parents had lived" (Anderson 64) she "would have become the next guardian of their house" (Anderson 64). The gate through which the dead pass away is

tied to the houses with chicken legs. Baba lets Marinka believe that she is her granddaughter, meaning that Marinka should follow into her footsteps.

The away in this novel is preceded by Marinka telling how she dislikes the Yaga lifestyle. She dreams about a life where she can make human friends, a life she knows nothing about: “I wish I could fly down there, Jack. […] and spend an evening with the living” (Anderson 12). The guiding of spirits to the afterlife makes Baba happy, but it makes Marinka feel even more lonely. Marinka longs for a different life, a life where she will not be tied to a house and where she can become whatever she likes. She refers back to her past as well. In the past she was content with her life, she “used to try to guess what [the lives of the dead] had been like, or what pets they might have had” (Anderson 11). According to Nodelman and Reimer’s pattern the “young creature […] enjoys the security of a comfortable home until something happens to make it unhappy” (189). The source of Marinka’s unhappiness is her solitary life. Her grandmother wants her to stay close to the house, since it keeps her alive. Since Marinka does not know that she is a spirit, she does not feel the need to listen to her grandmother.

The away starts when Marinka leaves her comfort zone. She leaves her house for several hours and encounters a boy called Benjamin near her fence, whom she befriends. This is the first of several smaller events that make up Marinka’s adventure. When her house decides to leave again a day after Marinka and Benjamin met, Marinka becomes even more fed up with the way she has to live. After an evening of guiding the dead, Marinka encounters a young spirit called Nina, who refuses to leave her human life behind since she does not know she has passed away (70). Marinka ignores her responsibilities towards her Baba and befriends Nina in an attempt to feel less lonely. However, this turns out to be dangerous, a common trait of the no-name pattern (Nodelman and Reimer 189), since this will make Nina fade. Spirits that do not leave through the gate quick enough will fade and will not be able to leave to the world of the dead. Marinka tries to right her mistake by trying to guide Nina

through the gate, but it turns out it is too late. Nina has faded and is too weak to go through the gate on her own. Baba Yaga decides to accompany Nina, but since Baba is old she is too weak to come back to the world of the living. Before she leaves, Baba tells Marinka the truth about her parents and why she is tied to the house with chicken legs. It turns out that Marinka and her parents passed away in a fire, but that Marinka's spirit refused to leave through the gate. Baba decided to raise the spirit as her own granddaughter. Throughout the away Marinka has "learned the truth about the big world" (Nodelman and Reimer 189). Marinka has learned that her selfish actions have larger outcomes than she thought, and that the outside world is more cruel than she thought.

The novel loses the focus on the absence of her parents in the part of the away. At this point the novel focusses on the personal development of Marinka and her newfound awareness that the world she dreams of is not accurate. Marinka finds out about a family secret, namely that her parents were not guardians themselves and that Marinka's future is forced upon her by Baba. This makes her question many things that Baba has told her. However, in the end Marinka is at peace with the decision her grandmother has made for her and she learns to appreciate her new place within the Yaga community. Marinka's place in the Yaga community and her home with Benjamin, the old Yaga, and Benjamin's father form a new home for Marinka.

Marinka returns to a home-like situation when her house decides to bring her to the house of her old friend Benjamin. She is welcomed by Benjamin and his father, who become her new family. Benjamin and his father are yet another example of a non-traditional family in this novel. The two families that receive the most focus in this novel are both non-traditional.

Nodelman and Reimer notice that "main characters in many texts of children's fiction are actually orphans" (197). This "prevalence of orphans in children's fiction seems to relate to a central concern adults have with children's independence and security" (Nodelman and Reimer 197). Marinka is an orphan, which gives her the freedom to

go on adventures without parental supervision. Her grandmother takes only parts of the parenting role onto herself but busies herself with the guiding of spirits. The role of an orphan lends itself well to the home away home-pattern. It not only gives the child freedom but the novel cannot blame parents for the adventures the children go on.

## Chapter 3 – *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018) by Catherine Doyle

### 3.1 *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018)

*The Storm Keeper's Island* tells the story of eleven-year-old Fionn Boyle who leaves his home in Dublin to visit his grandfather at Arranmore Island for the summer. Like *The House with Chicken Legs*, this novel is set in a fantasy world. However, this novel is not based on folklore. Arranmore Island is filled with superstition about a witch, Morrigan, who wanted to murder the people of Arranmore in order to strengthen her magic with theirs. Morrigan was defeated by Dagda, a wizard who protected Arranmore. Supposedly, Dagda left his magic behind at several places on the island like, for example, the Sea Cave. A cave that is said to grant a wish to the person who finds it. Arranmore island has a Storm Keeper, a person who saves the magic of the island's weather in candles. These candles can be used when Morrigan returns and will release their magic when lightened. Tara and Fionn's grandfather is the current Storm Keeper of the island, and he teaches about his profession to his grandson.

### 3.2 The No-Name Pattern in *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018)

The home situation that Fionn and his sister come from becomes apparent during the course of the novel. The novel starts with the departure of Fionn and his older sister Tara, who leave their home in Dublin to go to Arranmore Island to visit their grandfather. Fionn explains that they have to leave because his mother had to be taken into a mental hospital, she was "left behind inside a faceless building in Dublin surrounded by professional-type people wearing expensive jumpers and fancy spectacles" (Doyle 13). This is similar to *Boy Underwater*, in which Cymbeline's mother is taken into a mental hospital after Cymbeline's

near death as well. Fionn mentions that his mother had been tired constantly, she was even "too tired to be [their] mam" (Doyle 21). The reason for her hospitalisation is the death of Tara and Fionn's dad, who passed away in a storm. Fionn explains that he misses home, he misses "the Dublin smog, the clang of roadworks and the half-finished tram tracks cutting up the city and flinging tourists from footpaths. He never thought about whether he likes it or not […], only that it was familiar, and to Fionn familiarity meant home" (Doyle 2). Fionn states clearly that he saw Dublin as his home environment. The longing for his home functions as a substitute for the home situation from which the main character often departs in stories that follow the no-name pattern.

Family plays a significant role in *The Storm Keeper's Island*.This becomes clear when the reader learns about the reason for Fionn and Tara's departure from Dublin. The absence of a motherly figure in his life on Arranmore is apparent. The Boyle family have a rich history on the island, all men in the family have worked on the life boats of the island often leading them into dangerous situations. However, there is not much information on the women in the Boyle family. It mainly focusses on Fionn's mother and sister as the only women in the family.

The relationship between Fionn and Tara is given a significant amount of attention in the novel. This relationship is characterised by many fights. Tara and Fionn used to be friends, and they even had "something in common until the day she turned thirteen and he stayed eleven, and suddenly she was much too wise and too clever to hang around and play video games with him anymore" (Doyle 3). This change in their relationship receives quite some focus in the novel. However, between their fights Fionn confesses to his grandfather that he thinks that Tara is actually "not so bad" (Doyle 173). Tara and Fionn's relationship grows and changes during the novel. Fionn thinks that Tara chooses her boyfriend over her family. Tara's boyfriend wants to find the sea cave to steal the wish that is supposedly available to the first to get there. Since Tara goes with her boyfriend on this journey, Fionn

becomes suspicious. However, it turns out that this was a tactic from Tara to block her boyfriend's plans (Doyle 226-27). It turns out that Tara and Fionn both want the same thing: they want their mother to return to Arranmore (Doyle 227).

The away part starts when Fionn leaves his home in Dublin to visit his grandfather on the island. Fionn and Tara have to leave Dublin for the summer and live with their grandad Malachy Boyle, who is the current Storm Keeper of Arranmore island. Tara has been to Arranmore before and leaves their grandad's house often to go and explore the island in the hopes of finding Dagda's Sea Cave. She excludes Fionn from these adventures and leaves him behind with their grandad. Since the two of them, Fionn and Malachy, spend such a significant amount of time together Malachy tells Fionn about his position as the island's Storm Keeper. The Storm Keeper's candles contain memories of the weather, which is the island's magic, as well as memories of events. The one who lights the candle can travel back to a certain memory. This leads Fionn searching for information about his deceased father and their family's origin in the candles. When lighting a candle, the person who lights it goes back to the memory inside the candle. Fionn lights several candles and gains information on the history of the island as well as his ancestors. Towards the end of the novel, Tara discovers the Sea Cave in which she becomes trapped when the tide rises. Fionn takes two candles, one of high tide and one of low tide and makes his way into the Sea Cave. Upon saving his sister he lights the high tide candle. This candle contains the story of their father's death. Fionn's father knew what would be happening years later and decided to save his son.

The bond between Malachy Boyle and Fionn Boyle gets the main focus during the novel. Since Tara often leaves Fionn with their grandad, they have quite some time to talk and get to know each other. Malachy tells Fionn about the last time the islanders used the sea cave to make a wish, when Malachy's father's life was in danger. Malachy knows that Fionn will become the next Storm Keeper and tries to prepare him by telling him about the magic of the island as well as the art of making candles. This is similar to Marinka in *The House with*

*the Chicken Legs*, whose grandmother tries to prepare her to become the next Baba Yaga. The strength of their bond becomes even clearer when Malachy lets Fionn light a candle containing the memory of his father. Through this candle Fionn finds out about the largest family secret: why their father surrendered to a storm when he knew it would cause his death. Fionn's father travelled through time to save his unborn son. This knowledge gives their family the chance to become closer again as well. Furthermore, the importance of this relationship is highlighted on the eve of the rising of the new Storm Keeper. During the novel, it is clear that Malachy is ill and getting worse. Since Malachy can wield the island's magic, Fionn asks him to use some of this magic on himself. It turns out that Malachy already did this, "the candle on the mantelpiece. The memory… it's [Fionn]" (Doyle 239). Malachy's condition is worse than Fionn knew. However, a combination of the island's magic and the memory of his grandson has kept Malachy alive.

Arranmore Island has become Fionn's new home environment. Nodelman and Reimer state that "the texts are often about what it means to have a home or lose one or find a new one" (192). *The Storm Keeper's Island* aligns with the concept of finding a new home, since Fionn does not leave Arranmore Island to go back to Dublin in the end. His home, and the familiarity he longed for while on his adventure, follow him to the island. His mother decides to come to Arranmore after the adventure in the cave. While his mother fills the gap of the familiarity Fionn is longing for, the final passage of the novel shows that it is not just the presence of his mother that has made Arranmore his home. The magic of the Island lives inside Fionn now since he is the Storm Keeper, and it connects him to the island. The novel concludes with Fionn stating that "they were all here now. They were home" (Doyle 298).

The three relationships that gain the most attention, Fionn and his mother, Fionn and Tara, and Fionn and Malachy, form the main framework of the novel and help the novel underline the importance of family. Additionally, Fionn shows that home is not a place but a feeling, and that he feels at home when his family is with him on the island. However, this

novel, just like the two novels discussed previously, displays the coming of age pattern as well. The novel discusses Fionn going from a childlike worldview to a more responsible and adult like worldview.

## Conclusion

All three novels, *Boy Underwater* (2018), *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018), and *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018) agree to some extent with the no-name pattern that Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer suggest in *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (2003). Nodelman and Reimer note that "though not identical to it, many other texts for children relate significantly to it" (189). As pointed out earlier, children's literature displays what adults believe to be important for children to learn: "Children are exposed to […] books and movies exactly and only because adults allow it; meanwhile, adults also keep children from books and movies presenting alternative views on [certain] matters" (Nodelman and Reimer 108). However, it is interesting to note that all protagonists in the novels are forced to grow up quickly in order to deal with family secrets. This might mean that the novels contain the elements of a coming of age story as well. Therefore it would be interesting for future

research to look into the differences and similarities between the coming of age story and the no-name story pattern.

The three novels discussed in this paper all contain a large role for family and family matters. The novels discuss atypical families and family bonds, a one parent family for both *Boy Underwater* (2018) and *The Storm Keeper's Island* (2018), and an orphan in *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018). In these novels the job of the families is to "provide a discrete backdrop of normality against which remarkable things […] stand out" (Lesnik-Oberstein 152). However, these families provide a rich backdrop and the stories, while mainly focussing on the desire of these children for excitement, revolve mainly around the families.

*Boy Underwater* (2018), and *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018) both end with the revealing of family secrets. In the case of *Boy Underwater* (2018) these secrets include a feud between Cymbeline's mother and aunt, a father that has been left out of his life, and a deceased brother. In *The House with Chicken Legs* (2018) the secret revolves around the direct family of Marinka as well. Uncovering this secret causes Marinka to lose the family she thought she had, but she gains a new family with Benjamin and his father. Cymbeline only gains family, his father, by finding out the secret. In *The Storm Keeper's Island*, Fionn gains a relationship with his grandfather and a better understanding of his mother and sister.

The no-name story pattern, which is characterised by three phases of home, away, and home, shows the importance of the return home. As Nodelman and Reimer state, "If there is a return home at the end it is no longer really the same place. The people who live there have had experiences that have changed its meaning and their attitude toward it, just as those characters who move through dangerous experiences to new and better homes end up understanding themselves and the idea of home differently" (198). Accordingly, the protagonists in the novels discussed return home with more knowledge about their family and, more importantly, themselves.

The no-name story pattern is suitable for the transfer of knowledge of different types of family and home situations in order to teach children more about others. Literature for

children helps shape the child's perception of traditional and non-traditional families (White 3). The novels discussed in this paper all follow non-traditional families, *Boy Underwater* and *The Storm Keeper's Island* include single parent families and the protagonist of *The House with Chicken Legs* is an orphan raised by her grandmother. These families may shape the perception of the people surrounding them since literature portraying non-traditional families and family roles can help children in becoming more open-minded about different types of families (4). Lindsey White explains that books function as mirrors for children, they show "their own worlds and cultures" (4) but they function as a window as well. This window allows the children to look into different peoples' lives and learn about their worlds and cultures. The no-name story pattern emphasises the return home and with this the family the protagonist returns to. While it might be coincidence, the novels discussed in this paper all discuss family secrets and problems during the away part. This gives a larger stage to the family in the novel as a whole. Since family gets a significant amount of attention during these novels, they display more information about the non-traditional families and problems. The attention the problems and non-traditional families receive in the novels discussed in this paper might show new insights into family structures the reader may not be familiar with. These insights "can make them conscious that there is more than one way of being normal" (Nodelman and Reimer 149).

This paper shed some light on the way in which the no-name story pattern functions in three middle grade children's novels. Furthermore, it shows how the no-name story pattern highlights family relations in these novels. Further research may look into different novels and a larger sample in order to gain more conclusive results. Additionally, it might be interesting to look at the no-name story pattern and how it compares to the coming of age story. Children's perceptions of non-traditional family structures and how this is shaped by the novels they read should receive more attention as well. Lastly, it might be good to look

into the no-name story pattern as it appears in series and how it is distributed over the different parts of the series.

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