Matthias Bauer and Lisa Ebert

Ambiguous Heroes in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

A Qualitative and Quantitative Reading of Five Authors and Ten Novels

Introduction

Reflecting on heroes is a prominent topic in nineteenth-century British literature. Quantitatively, this is suggested by a significant rise in the use of expressions like "hero", "heroic", and (more gradually) "heroine" after 1750, as shown by the Google Ngram Viewer. Qualitative evidence is given, for example, by Thomas Carlyle's influential and provocative 1840 lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, which are premised on the bold assertion that "Great Men" (his synonym for heroes) are "the soul of the whole world's history" (2). Carlyle is exclusively concerned with historical (rather than fictional) heroes, whom he finds in various fields of excellence. His heroes are all male but still not necessarily the expected ones: for divinity, he chooses Odin; for prophet Mahomet (not an obvious choice in Victorian England); for poet Dante and Shakespeare (less uncommon); for priest Luther and Knox; for man of letters Johnson, Rousseau and Burns; and for king Cromwell and Napoleon. In the last lecture – focused on two figures instrumental to undermining traditional ideas of kingship – Carlyle defines a hero by the notion of ability: the hero as king "is practically the summary for us of *all* the various figures of Heroism […] King, *Könning*, which means *Can*-ning, Able-man" (238). The fanciful etymology suggests to us that we can never be sure how seriously Carlyle means what he says;[1] his use of the term "Hero-worship", for example, is expressly motivated by his desire to be "not […] too grave about" a grave subject (296). This use coincides with the fact that he believes Napoleon, after losing touch with "Reality", became "our last Great Man" (296): an ambiguous statement, either claiming that he was the latest on record or the last ever to exist. In Carlyle's final lecture, the apotheosis of heroism may go together with its ending, the demise of the last of its incarnations.

Carlyle is quite certain in his judgments, but his apodictic statements still reveal that he wonders as to who is a hero, and what is a hero, and can heroes (still) exist, and that he answers these questions in ambiguous and paradoxical ways.[2] Similar questions are addressed, and connected to ambiguity and paradox, when Charles Dickens, in the famous first sentence of *David Copperfield*, has his narrator state, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (Dickens 1). David asks if he will be a hero, and by using the expression "hero of my own life" both qualifies the answer and puts the nature of the hero up to inquiry. The ambiguity of the expression is triggered by the ambiguity of "life", which could mean both the course of his living existence and its written account in the form of an autobiography. Two of the possible readings are, "whether I shall be the most important person in my own life" and "whether I shall be the protagonist of my own life story" (or "whether the protagonist will actually be I, the narrator"; see Bauer, *Leben* 39-41). The readings are similar but by no means identical: David may well come to the conclusion that he is the protagonist of his autobiography but not the most important, able, influential and exemplary person in his life.

From these first contacts with our topic we are beginning to derive several impressions that deserve further exploration: the concept of the "hero" attracted the attention of nineteenth-century British writers but not necessarily in a straightforward, unsurprising manner. "Hero" as an exceptional person in life and "hero" as a literary protagonist were related to each other but not always in agreement. Thackeray's programmatic subtitle of *Vanity Fair*, *A Novel without a Hero*, plays with this relationship and the concurrent ambiguity. We notice that the literary work itself is signposted as the site where heroes (do not) exist; as David Copperfield claims, it is the pages of his own writing that give evidence to and clarify his status as a hero. When the interrelation of life and fiction is at issue, our probings into the hero inevitably must take into account Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a novel whose

protagonist mixes up her life with the world of gothic fiction. Catherine Morland, "who had by nature nothing heroic about her", at the age of fourteen prefers sports "to books – or at least books of information" (ch. 1). "But from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives" (ch. 1). *Northanger Abbey* enriches our perspective on heroes as real-life personages and as protagonists of works of literature by a third perspective: heroes may be protagonists that fulfil certain expectations (such as knowing what to quote when in a hole); heroes, as many works of fiction show us, are defined by a set of features that are frequently determined by genre,[3] and they can serve as role models. (There may also be gender issues involved since Catherine expressly imitates heroines. More on this below.) Prototypical (literary) heroes and heroines, however, may thus easily turn into stereotypes or cardboard cutouts and lose the very status those features were meant to establish. Jane Austen, as always, is having her cake and eating it: she exploits and employs the very stereotypes ironically exposed by presenting a protagonist who models herself on them. This third perspective makes us even more curious about the reflection on heroes in nineteenth-century literature.

Our questions

We are beginning to sense that "hero" is a concept that, to nineteenth-century writers, was attractive but ambiguous (or attractive because ambiguous) and that is hardly to be captured by typologies based on fixed features.[4] Our general hypothesis is that the interplay and the tension between literary and 'real-life' notions are keys to learning more about how the concept was understood. This approach presupposes that the three different meanings of "hero(ine)" that we have encountered – protagonist, prototypical literary hero(ine), and 'heroic' human being – are frequently evoked in combinations of at least two. If this is the case, our question is if we can learn more about those combinations, e.g. if there are recurring connections. This may be answered by annotating a corpus of nineteenth-century fiction (see below).

We use the term "ambiguity" when there are several discrete interpretations of the same utterance (see e.g. Bauer et al.). Accordingly, the polysemy of the term "hero" (e.g. protagonist, outstanding person) is an example of ambiguity.

A 'real -life' hero can be described by the adjective "heroic", whereas "hero" in the sense of protagonist cannot. There may be different and even contradictory notions of what the true and distinctive qualities of a hero are, depending on ideological and subjective preferences. As we have seen, to one person "Great Men" (or able women) may be heroes, to another the true heroism lies in everyday achievements. Similarly, there may be various definitions of the hero as protagonist. Is it enough for a character to appear most frequently and be deeply involved in the action of a story or play in order to be called its hero, or do we require further features, e.g. ethical qualities? We regard these latter cases as examples of underspecification rather than ambiguity.[5]

The second of the meanings indicated above, the prototypical literary hero(ine), is in itself a combination of the other two, as it endows the dominant role of a literary character with certain qualities that make her or him special. Still it is purely literary. It may therefore be regarded as a subspecies of the hero as protagonist but can nevertheless be clearly distinguished from the latter in that it is defined not by a character's role and function within an individual text but by character features and functions occurring in a number of texts (e.g. a genre).

William Makepeace Thackeray's early novel *Catherine* (1839-40) provides an example of the connection between the different meanings of "hero"; it also serves to show that by identifying the ambiguity and using it to annotate literary texts we hope to learn more about what the concept of "hero" means for the poetics of nineteenth-century fiction and, conversely, what "hero" as a literary concept means for the idea of the social and historical phenomenon. In the middle of chapter 1, we come across the following passage:

> Although we have, in this quiet way, and without any flourishing of trumpets, or beginning of chapters, introduced Mr. Hayes to the public; and although, at first sight, a sneaking carpenter's boy may seem hardly worthy of the notice of an intelligent reader, who looks for a good cut-throat or highwayman for a hero, or a pickpocket at the very least: this gentleman's words and actions should be carefully studied by the public, as he is destined to appear before them under very polite and curious circumstances during the course of this history.

In this metadiegetic passage, the narrator comments on his own story. For this reason, it is

obvious that "hero" denotes our first meaning, protagonist (hero 1). We are implicitly told that Mr Hayes will be the hero of the present narrative because he will disappoint readers expecting a certain type of literary hero (our second meaning, hero 2): a criminal. This sort of protagonist, who may count Macheath in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) among his ancestors, was found in the then fashionable genre of the Newgate Novel, to which *Catherine* is a critical response. Here we see a logical connection between hero 1 and hero 2: Mr Hayes is hero 1 but not hero 2, or even: he is hero 1 *if or because he is not* hero 2. But the third meaning of *hero*, the extraordinary or exemplary character in real life (hero 3) is also involved. What Thackeray wants to do by hero 1 not being hero 2 is to dismiss the idea of hero 2 being a representative of hero 3: criminal novel heroes are not meant to be exemplary characters. There is quite some irony going along with this, however, since Catherine, the eponymous heroine of the book (hero 1), is a criminal who, in the course of the novel, kills her husband, the aforementioned Mr Hayes. In her case, the logical connection does not work, since she is both hero 1 and hero 2 and, if responses to the novel may be believed (see e.g. Cabot), created at least with some readers the effect of being hero 3 as well – a phenomenon that is familiar from cases such as Defoe's Moll Flanders, who is also a criminal and not meant to impress readers as a role model but nevertheless elicits positive responses. Furthermore, since Mr Hayes in the course of the novel also becomes a criminal under Catherine's influence, we see that the statement quoted above may turn out to be ambiguous. The narrator's claim that Mr Hayes, a "sneaking carpenter's boy", will be a protagonist worth studying even though (or especially because) he is not a Newgate Novel hero, may have to be qualified. Retrospectively, we may reinterpret "at first sight" in the quotation above and realise that he has become a criminal hero after all, even though, at first, he did not look like one and even though he still is not the typical hero 2.

These initial close readings of passages in which we can identify one or several or all of our "hero" meanings contribute to developing our general question into a slightly more specific one. Seeing that in Thackeray's novel being a protagonist may or may not be conditional on (not) being a stereotypical literary hero, we wonder whether the links between hero 1, hero 2, and hero 3 are frequently conditional ones, and whether we arrive at paradoxical results if the condition is negative ([only] if not – then). To cite one other example, the subtitle of Thackeray's

Vanity Fair, *A Novel without a Hero*, is not just ambiguous but also suggests some such relationship. This relationship in turn elicits further questions, e.g. whether the way the different meanings of "hero" are related to each other may be author-specific or characterise specific genres and/or modes of writing.

Method

Corpus and general approach

We will not be able to answer all these questions within the scope of this paper, but we would like to introduce a method of addressing them which, we hope, may be useful for other questions in literary studies as well. It can be related to what has been called "scalable reading" (see e.g. Mueller; Weitin) but is not identical with it, as we examine the relationship between the (qualitative) interpretation of individual passages with their (quantitative) analysis. Our above-mentioned purpose of "annotating" literary texts is based on the expectation that a practise familiar from corpus linguistics and digital literary studies will help us recognize and perhaps even discover features that are relevant to our questions. In order to find out more about the meanings of "hero" and their relationship to each other in nineteenth-century literature, we have chosen a corpus of ten novels by five authors (two from each) in which we annotate all occurrences of "hero" and "heroine", as well as their derivatives "heroic" and "heroism", and categorize them in accordance with our distinction of hero 1, hero 2, and hero 3. As a rule, the derivatives "heroic" and "heroism" will indicate a use of hero 3, since a protagonist may be called the hero of a narrative but not heroic or an example of heroism unless he is also a hero 3.

The categorization and annotation process is a heuristic tool which allows us to recognize concepts and text features concerning literary and real-life heroes and their relationship. In other words, we do not mark up the text based on the polysemy of "hero" in order to limit interpretation but in order to refine our interpretative sensibility: the need to make decisions in annotating points to features and problems we may not have thought about at the beginning. This means that the process is a recursive one: we will have to refine our categories and find new categories of annotation in the light of our findings,[6] and we will arrive at new questions, hypotheses (and findings) as an effect of our annotation and analysis. The way in which we proceed in annotating

the novels is not by having several annotators work independently and seek inter-annotator agreement afterwards but by peer-reviewed annotation, i.e. one annotator (LE) marks up the items and another annotator (MB) reviews them. The resulting discussion serves to instigate the process just mentioned.

Our considerations in putting together the corpus were size (the corpus must be small enough to make manual annotation feasible but large enough to recognize inter-individual tendencies) and variety (the corpus should represent different themes, genres and styles, male and female writers); the latter criterion was also the reason for selecting two novels by each author which are thematically and/or formally (e.g. generically) different. The resulting corpus comprises: Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* and *Sense and Sensibility*; Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters* and *North and South;* William Makepeace Thackeray, *Catherine* and *Vanity Fair*; Anthony Trollope, *The Small House at Allington* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.[7] In addition to the above-mentioned points, we were interested in the dynamics of using "hero" and its cognates within a particular work, which could also be elicited by our annotations.

Technical details and tools

A Microsoft Access database served as a heuristic tool that enabled a qualitative-quantitive reading of a large number of examples (223) from our ten novels. We first compiled all occurrences of the terms "hero", "heroine", "heroic" and "heroism" from Project Gutenberg text files of each novel along with their immediate co-text (one sentence).[8] Additionally, we extracted a longer quote, consisting of the 30 words that precede the term hero/heroine/heroic/heroism in the novel, the term itself and 30 subsequent words for more detailed analysis. We assigned a unique identifier to each example, which consists of a sequence of letters that specifies the novel the quote appears in and its author as well as of a number that denotes its relative position in the novel. The identifier CBJE5, for instance, refers to the term "hero" in Mr Rochester's question "You would like a *hero* of the road then?" in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (ch. 18; emphasis ours). Before this quote, Jane Eyre has called her younger self "not heroic enough" to leave the Reeds for poorer relatives (ch. 3), has likened Helen Burns to a "hero" (ch. 12) and commented on the fact that Mr Rochester is not a "heroic-looking young

gentleman" (ch. 12); furthermore, Miss Ingram has called James Hepburn "just the sort of wild, fierce, bandit hero whom I could have consented to gift with my hand" (ch. 17), making Mr Rochester's question the fifth occurrence of "hero", "heroine", "heroic" or "heroism" in the novel. This material along with the bibliographic information of the quotes was first collected manually and then with a *Python* script, which accelerated the process.

The database is designed to allow for a detailed annotation of our data to reveal similarities, overarching patterns and differences within and between novels. For each example, we annotated which of the distinct but related meanings of "hero" and "heroine" are evoked in its specific context and if the quote can be related to one of our hypotheses (see below). We analysed the linguistic properties of each short quote in two additional tables, one for "hero" and one for "heroine." For each noun phrase including "hero" or "heroine" we noted whether an article, pronoun, or adjective was used and which one (e.g. "the/a hero", "our/her hero", "poetical/military hero"). Both adjectives and articles serve as strong markers of specific meanings of hero(ine). "Our hero", for instance, almost always denotes the protagonist, whereas "my hero" spoken by somebody other than a heterodiegetic narrator usually denotes a hero in the sense of 'heroic.' We also annotated the use of plural/singular, negation (e.g. "not a hero"), genitive constructions (e.g. "a hero of the road"/ "his mother's hero"), comparatives (e.g. "like a heroine"), terms from the semantic field of literature (e.g. "a hero of romance") and phrases that specify the characteristics of "hero" or "heroine." In yet another table, we analysed the overall use of the terms "hero", "heroine", "heroic", and "heroism" in each novel.

We annotated all of our data manually since many of the features we are interested in depend on in-depth analysis and knowledge about the novel as a whole. To be able to decide if "hero" in a specific context refers to the protagonist of a novel, for instance, the annotator needs to be familiar with the plot. When Jane Eyre meets Mr Rochester for the first time, for instance, and she comments on the fact that he is not "heroic-looking" (ch. 12), the play with different meanings of "hero" becomes apparent for those who know that Jane will eventually marry him.

Annotating our hypotheses

Annotating the meanings of each example from our ten novels in which the terms "hero" or

"heroine" appear enabled us to see correlations between meanings across texts in a transparent manner. We thus gained an overview of all our entries in which specific types of the ambiguity of hero(ine) occur, i.e. examples in which the meaning hero(ine)-protagonist is evoked together with prototypical literary hero(ine) and/or heroic hero(ine), as well as those in which the latter two cases coincide. Those correlations could then be displayed in concise tables, which enabled us to address the function of the ambiguity of "hero(ine)" and the connections between meanings within novels (intratextual developments) and in our entire corpus on three different scales: since each specific case of "hero(ine)", "heroic", and "heroism" was entered into the database with its immediate context, a detailed annotation based on a close reading of our 223 examples could be followed by a concise display of all examples in a specific novel in the order in which they appear in the text. Without the database with its ability to filter and sort examples according to the annotations, novel-wide analyses would have been comparatively easy for *North and South* (seven examples) or *Jane Eyre* (ten examples), but very difficult for *The Small House at Allington* (31 examples)[9] or *Vanity Fair* (48 examples). Our third step, a comparison of connections across all novels, would have been even less manageable.

After the initial annotation of examples, we approached our data with the question of which specific meanings are shown to complement or exclude each other within novels based on the following hypotheses:

I am only a hero(ine)1/2/3 if I am not a hero(ine)1/2/3. (Paradox)

I am not a hero(ine)1/2/3 if I am a hero(ine)1/2/3. (Inversion of paradox)

I am only a hero(ine)1/2/3 if I am a hero(ine)1/2/3. (Positive link)

We analysed all texts in our corpus according to each of our hypotheses, a process that was repeated for each type of ambiguity. The combination "heroine" meaning protagonist as well as prototypical literary character was, for instance, considered in all combinations for the cases of paradox, inversion of paradox, and positive link.

We proceeded in a chronological order on the level of discourse for each novel to do justice to intratextual patterns such as the development of characters towards or away from concepts of heroism or prototypes of literary hero(ines). Unambiguous text passages that in their interplay link and contrast the different meanings of "hero(ine)" are frequently as relevant to these patterns as ambiguities. Accordingly, we also took into account unambiguous cases in which characters or narrators explicitly evoke one of the meanings of "hero(ine)", e.g. only "protagonist" or "prototypical literary hero(ine)."

Results: Our hypotheses

The annotation of "hero(ine)" in our ten novels has revealed that a number of ambiguities play with combinations of their different senses. The following table shows the general distribution of meanings of "hero" and "heroine" (including ambiguous instances) in our corpus (**tab. 1**).[10]

All three meanings of "hero(ine)" that we have specified appear quite frequently in our corpus. If we look at the distribution of meanings in two novels, a different image emerges that shows the variety between novels (**tab. 2**).

Austen's *Northanger Abbey* contains considerably more ambiguous examples than Trollope's *The Small House at Allington*. While "hero(ine)" denotes a heroic human being in the vast majority of instances in Trollope's novel (albeit frequently ironically; compare p. 22

	h1	h2	h3	h1+h2	h1+h3	h2+h3	h1+h2+h3
"hero" + "heroine" (absolute)	73	60	105	35	15	17	5
"hero" + "heroine" (relative)	43.2%	35.5%	62.1%	20.7%	8.9%	10.1%	3%

	h1	h2	h3	h1+h2	h1+h3	h2+h3
The Small House at Allington	11	7	21	3	4	4
	39.3%	25%	75%	10.7%	14.3%	14.3%
Northanger Abbey	25	23	3	19	0	3
	86.2%	79.3%	10.3%	65.5%	0	10.3%

Table 1 (above) and table 2 (below).

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below), "hero(ine)" mostly relates to a protagonist or a prototypical literary character in *Northanger Abbey*. Each of the novels in our corpus shows a unique reflection on the different meanings of "hero(ine)"; nevertheless, common patterns emerge if they are analysed alongside each other.

All ten novels contain dynamic processes of development in the course of which several meanings of "hero(ine)" are connected to or contrasted with each other: protagonists undergo positive or negative changes, as a result of which they become more or less like prototypical literary hero(ine)s or heroic role models. Some of these protagonists meet one or several potential spouses that are compared to heroic figures of the past and present and to prototypical literary heroines. The faults and shortcomings of seemingly heroic characters are revealed in the course of the novels, and unlikely candidates for heroism turn out to be heroes, a process which frequently allows the protagonist to choose his or her own "hero" in the form of a husband or wife who can then be considered co-protagonists.

Conditional links between "hero(ine)" as protagonist and "hero(ine)" as prototypical protagonist

The polysemy of "hero(ine)" in the sense of protagonist and as denoting prototypical literary hero(in)es is frequently evoked and played with in our ten novels when it comes to the development especially of female protagonists (see below pp. 12-13 for a discussion of the difference between "hero" and "heroine"). Even if some heroines initially strive to become more like prototypical literary heroines, eventually the following (paradoxical) hypothesis is sustained in the novels of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell:

> Someone is only a protagonist (hero(ine) 1) if s/he is not a prototypical literary character (hero(ine) 2).

Within our corpus, this conditional link appears most pervasively in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Austen's novel begins with the narrator's claim that "[n]o one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine" (ch. 1), and in the course of the text 19 passages evoke the interplay between heroine 1 and heroine 2. From the beginning, the narrator elaborates on external features

and character traits that novel heroines are supposed to possess but Catherine does not. As we have seen, her subsequent "training for a heroine" (ch. 1) includes "read[ing] all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives" (ch. 1), even though Catherine's life seems to be quite uneventful by comparison. Her family's reaction to her departure to Bath is "rather consistent with the common feelings of common life, than with the refined susceptibilities, the tender emotions which the first separation of a heroine from her family ought always to excite" (ch. 2), and on the journey, "[n]either robbers nor tempests befriended them, nor one lucky overturn to introduce them to the hero" (ch. 2). In the course of the novel, Catherine finds out that she neither is nor should be like the prototypical heroines of the novels she has read about, a realization for which her relationship with Henry Tilney is crucial. When he acts towards her in a cold manner "[f]eelings rather natural than heroic possessed her" (ch. 12).

Other protagonists in our ten novels are shown to eventually move away from the world of prototypical literary heroines, albeit in a more subtle fashion than in *Northanger Abbey*. In *Shirley*, for example, the heterodiegetic narrator early on indicates the journey that Caroline Helstone has to undergo:

> Caroline Helstone was just eighteen years old, and at eighteen the true narrative of life is yet to be commenced. Before that time we sit listening to a tale, a marvellous fiction, delightful sometimes, and sad sometimes, almost always unreal. Before that time our world is heroic, its inhabitants half-divine or semi-demon; its scenes are dream-scenes; darker woods and stranger hills, brighter skies, more dangerous waters, sweeter flowers, more tempting fruits, wider plains, drearier deserts, sunnier fields than are found in nature, overspread our enchanted globe. […]
> At that time, at eighteen, drawing near the confines of illusive, void dreams, Elf-land lies behind us, the shores of Reality rise in front. […] [A]t eighteen the school of experience is to be entered, and her humbling, crushing, grinding, but yet purifying and invigorating lessons are yet to be learned. (ch. 7)

One such "lesson" arrives when Robert Moore suddenly rejects Caroline and she has to learn "the great lesson how to endure without a sob"

(ch. 7; see below for a more detailed discussion of this passage). In this instance Caroline's plight is related by the narrator to that of the heroine of a ballad, "Puir Mary Lee", who in a similar situation "is not complaining, but she is sitting alone in the snowstorm, and you hear her thoughts" which are, as the narrator remarks, "not the thoughts of a model heroine under her circumstances, but they are those of a deeply-feeling, strongly-resentful peasant-girl" (ch. 7). The two instances of "heroic" and "heroine" clearly show the negative causal or even conditional link between hero(ine) 2 and hero(ine) 1: even though the passage is not expressly self-referential, we see that in a novel which strives to represent "Reality", the hero as protagonist cannot be like a stereotypical literary heroine. In the first passage from *Shirley*, we notice that this separation between hero(ine) 2 and hero(ine) 1 is seen as part of growing up and thus illustrates the dynamics of the interplay between the kinds of hero on the intradiegetic level, as part of the world represented. The "narrative of life" is said to change in *Shirley* from a "marvellous fiction" to a factual account. Only if we leave behind hero 2 can we become hero 1, the protagonists of our own lives. Our third category of hero(ine), the heroical one, also comes in, for even though the "heroic" world is called a "fiction", it is also strongly associated with the heroes of mythology ("half-divine or semi-demon"), which prototypically inhabit a realm between fact and fiction.

Despite her disappointment, Caroline later has to be prevented by Shirley from blindly running towards Robert Moore during a riot to "help him", an expression to which Shirley replies sarcastically

> How? – by inspiring him with heroism? Pooh! these are not the days of chivalry. It is not a tilt at a tournament we are going to behold, but a struggle about money, and food, and life. (ch. 19)

Heroes in the third sense (admixed with heroes as stereotypical protagonists of chivalric romance) are rejected as unbefitting of the contemporary world and, accordingly, a novel representing that world.

Caroline's development after all these "lessons" life and Shirley have imparted to her is revealed in a conversation with Mrs Yorke. The latter reproaches her for "hav[ing] managed to train [her] features into an habitually lackadaisical expression, better suited to a novel-heroine than to a woman who is to make her way in the real world by dint of common sense" as a result of "all these romantic ideas" (ch. 23). Caroline

skilfully refutes Mrs Yorke's arguments, revealing that her assumptions about her are "a mere conjecture on [her] part" that can only be derived from clichés about "bookish" young women and not from personal knowledge (ch. 23). Both sides, it appears, follow the idea that hero(ine) 2 is to be rejected in the real world (i.e. the fictional world where one may become the protagonist).

When considering the combinations of "hero(ine) 1" and "hero(ine) 2", we notice two exceptions in our corpus in which protagonists are not shown to reject the features of prototypical literary heroines but to embody them. This is an example of our hypothesis (3), a positive link between different meanings of "hero(ine)." In Thackeray's parodistic take on Newgate Novels in *Catherine*, the protagonist must necessarily resemble prototypical specimens of such novels to satirize the reading public's taste for such characters. As we have seen above, however, this positive conditional link serves to dissociate the hero(ine) from any positive concept of hero(ine) 3. Furthermore, in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* various characters try to find out who "the heroine of the prevailing scandal" surrounding Mr Preston is. Molly appears to be the "heroine", but it is actually Cynthia, as Lady Harriet figures out by comparing them to clichés of literary heroines:

> I think it is much more likely that Clare's own daughter – that pretty pawky Miss Kirkpatrick – is the real heroine of this story […] [.] She always looks like a heroine of genteel comedy; and those young ladies were capable of a good deal of innocent intriguing, if I remember rightly. Now little Molly Gibson has a certain *gaucherie* about her which would disqualify her at once from any clandestine proceedings. (ch. 49)

Again, this is an example of hero(ine) 1 and hero(ine) 2 being related on the intradiegetic level with characters being compared to, or behaving like, prototypical heroines. In this case, Cynthia serves as a foil for the protagonist Molly, whose character "disqualifies" her as a heroine of the subplot, all the while making her a suitable heroine of the main story while the opposite applies to Cynthia. The rare example of a positive link between different meanings of "hero(ine)" thus only serves to emphasize its absence in the more crucial case.

Conditions for the protagonist to become a heroic hero(ine)

Our annotations show a further correlation: hero(ine) 1 not being hero(ine) 2 can be the condition of becoming hero(ine) 3. This is also a variant of our paradoxical hypothesis (1), as a positive link is only possible if a negative condition is fulfilled. While the protagonists of several of our novels are thus shown to move away from characteristics of a prototypical literary heroine, many of them are shown to become a more heroic human being as their characters develop. These two patterns are intertwined in *North and South,* where Margaret Hale realizes that striving to become like "any heroine she ever read or heard of in romance" is not enough to become one of "the truly heroic":

> On some such night as this she remembered promising to herself to live as brave and noble a life as any heroine she ever read or heard of in romance, a life sans peur et sans reproche; it had seemed to her then that she had only to will, and such a life would be accomplished. And now she had learnt that not only to will, but also to pray, was a necessary condition in the truly heroic. Trusting to herself, she had fallen. It was a just consequence of her sin, that all excuses for it, all temptation to it, should remain for ever unknown to the person in whose opinion it had sunk her lowest. (ch. 48)

The sort of heroism Margaret aspires to includes not exceptional deeds but prayer in the face of adversity. The development of hero(ine) 1 is therefore shown to be from a hero(ine) 2 (or aspiring to be a hero(ine) 2) that is falsely thought to be a hero(ine) 3 to actually becoming hero(ine) 3. In terms of our hypotheses, this is still related to a character only being hero(ine) 1 if she is not hero(ine) 2, but it also brings up only being hero(ine) 3 if she is not hero(ine) 2 (see below pp. 19-21). Naming *North and South* and *Jane Eyre* as examples, Korte and Lethbridge describe a type of "affirmative heroism" in Victorian literature that consists of "new concepts of heroism [that] are inscribed into realist fiction and defined on a more modest, practicable scale that suits the dimensions of ordinary life" (18).

In *Jane Eyre,* the protagonist likewise undergoes a considerable development in the course of which she learns from her classmate Helen Burns how to become more heroic. Our systematic annotations of the ambiguity of "hero" and cognates help us model a central feature of the *Bildungsroman*. In an earlier chapter of the novel, Jane has described herself as "not heroic enough to purchase liberty at the price of caste" (ch. 3) by moving from her cruel but rich aunt at Gateshead to possibly poorer but kinder relations of her father. Now at Lowood, Jane is forced to undergo a punishment that seems unbearable to her until Helen Burns intervenes:

> I, who had said I could not bear the shame of standing on my natural feet in the middle of the room, was now exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy. What my sensations were no language can describe; but just as they all rose, stifling my breath and constricting my throat, a girl came up and passed me: in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! How the new feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool. (ch. 7)

The impression of Helen's support is thus compared to that of "a hero" giving Jane, who is represented as a "slave or victim" the strength to bear her unjust punishment with dignity. Still, the hero(ine) 3 is not the protagonist, however much the protagonist may grow towards showing features of a heroine 3. Similarly, by the end of the novel, St. John Rivers is described as possessing an "aspect, at once so heroic and so martyr-like" (ch. 32) without becoming a hero 1.

Like Jane, Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* learns to become more heroic from a female role-model in the form of her sister Elinor. Both women initially seem to undergo a similar ordeal in that the men they love become or turn out to be engaged to another. While Marianne reacts with violent emotions, Elinor is inwardly shaken to the core but outwardly reacts in a calm and composed way. When Edward Ferrars visits her with his fiancée in London, Elinor

> forced herself, after a moment's recollection, to welcome him, with a look and manner that were almost easy, and almost open; and another struggle, another effort still improved them. She would not allow the presence of Lucy, nor the consciousness of some injustice towards herself, to deter her from saying that she was happy to see him, and that she had very much regretted being from home, when

he called before in Berkeley Street. […] Her exertions did not stop here; for she soon afterwards felt herself so heroically disposed as to determine, under pretence of fetching Marianne, to leave the others by themselves; and she really did it, and THAT in the handsomest manner, for she loitered away several minutes on the landing-place, with the most high-minded fortitude, before she went to her sister. (ch. 35)

Marianne, whose feelings are described to be "strong in itself, and strongly spoken" criticizes Elinor's demeanor when she learns about Edward's engagement: "Edward seemed [to Marianne] a second Willoughby; and acknowledging as Elinor did, that she HAD loved him most sincerely, could she feel less than herself!" (ch. 37; emphasis in the original). After a reproof from Elinor, who explains that the calmness of her demeanor is no indication of the depth of her feelings, Marianne realizes that, "[b]ecause [Elinor's] merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away" (ch. 37). Marianne then promises to show similar composure in the presence of Edward and Lucy in spite of her feelings and indeed "performed her promise of being discreet, to admiration […] Such advances towards heroism in her sister, made Elinor feel equal to any thing herself" (ch. 37).

The same type of heroism that Marianne makes "advances towards" by imitating her sister is discussed in *Shirley* as a specific requirement of women in times of heartbreak. When Caroline Helstone is suddenly treated coldly by Robert Moore, who has made up his mind that he should make a more advantageous match than Caroline, the narrator comments:

> A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanation, a lover feminine can say nothing; if she did, the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret. Take the matter as you find it: ask no questions, utter no remonstrances; it is your best wisdom. You expected bread, and you have got a stone: break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyrized; do not doubt that your mental stomach – if you have such a thing – is strong as an ostrich's; the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an

egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. Never mind; in time, after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson how to endure without a sob. (ch. 7)

Caroline Helstone, Jane Eyre, Marianne Dashwood, and Margaret Hale confirm their position as hero(ine) 1 not just because they are not hero(ine)s 2 but also because, in that very process, they acquire character traits that allow them to be more heroic in trying situations. The point is that this is a special hero(ine) 3, never one that smacks of the stereotypes familiar from literary heroes/heroines 2. This will take us to the next evaluation of our annotations.

The protagonist's heroes

The heroine's learning process can frequently be related to another significant plot strand in many of our novels: the protagonists' search for his or her spouse. The narrator of Anthony Trollope's *Small House at Allington* ironically points out the prevalence of such a marriage plot when he comments that Mr Crosbie "has gotten to himself a wife – as a hero always should do" (ch. 59), and the narrator of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* similarly comments: "But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way" (ch. 1). This partner in life is frequently referred to as the protagonists' "hero", as in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters,* where the narrator comments early on that Molly "shrank from giving a personal form and name to the hero that was to be" (ch. 13). In most cases, these protagonists meet several potential spouses along the way, some of which are compared to heroic figures of the past and present and to prototypical literary heroines. Especially in the latter case, a pattern can be observed that can be described by the following hypothesis:

> I am not a hero in the sense of heroic (hero(ine) 3) if I am a prototypical literary character (hero(ine) 2).

Especially male characters that are introduced as similar to prototypical literary heroes turn out to be character failures and do not become the protagonist's "hero." Mr Crosbie in Trollope's *The*

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Small House at Allington makes this connection to prototypical literary heroes himself when reflecting on his broken engagement to Lily Dale:

> While resolving, during his first four or five days at the castle, that he would throw Lily Dale overboard, he had contrived to quiet his conscience by inward allusions to sundry heroes of romance. He had thought of Lothario, Don Juan, and of Lovelace; and had told himself that the world had ever been full of such heroes. And the world, too, had treated such heroes well; not punishing them at all as villains, but caressing them rather, and calling them curled darlings. Why should not he be a curled darling as well as another? Ladies had ever been fond of the Don Juan character, and Don Juan had generally been popular with men also. And then he named to himself a dozen modern Lotharios, – men who were holding their heads well above water, although it was known that they had played this lady false, and brought that other one to death's door, or perhaps even to death itself. War and love were alike, and the world was prepared to forgive any guile to militants in either camp. (ch. 25)

Crosbie thus employs "heroes of romance" to justify his actions in a text passage that unveils his character failures and also points at the problematic nature of a literary type that is nevertheless widely celebrated.

Willoughby in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, a similarly flawed but admired character, enters the narrative in the fashion of a prototypical literary hero when he saves Marianne after she hurts herself on a walk:

> His name […] was Willoughby, and his present home was at Allenham, from whence he hoped she would allow him the honour of calling tomorrow to enquire after Miss Dashwood. The honour was readily granted, and he then departed, to make himself still more interesting, in the midst of a heavy rain. His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness were instantly the theme of general admiration, and the laugh which his gallantry raised against Marianne received particular spirit from his exterior attractions […]. His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story; and in his carrying her into the house with so little previous formality, there was a rapidity of thought which

particularly recommended the action to her. Every circumstance belonging to him was interesting. His name was good, his residence was in their favourite village, and she soon found out that of all manly dresses a shooting-jacket was the most becoming. Her imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a sprained ankle was disregarded. (ch. 9)

As the narrator's comment that he left in a downpour "to make himself still more interesting" suggests, Willoughby turns out to be much more concerned with how he is perceived than with how he actually is, much like Mr Crosbie. Like him, he makes an unhappy mercenary match, whereas Marianne finally marries a deserving man, who initially appeared to her the very unappealing opposite of a "hero".[11]

The pattern of two potential partners, one of whom turns out to be the right choice, can be observed in several of our novels in a seemingly paradoxical way: those characters who are called "hero(ine)" or "heroic" and associated with "heroism" will turn out not to become the protagonist's "hero", whereas those who are either not associated with the heroic or for whom heroism is even explicitly negated become the protagonists' spouses in the end. Margaret Hale initially comments that she does not like Mr Thornton "at all" even if he is "a remarkable man"; her father replies that he does like him but "do[es]n't set him up for a hero, or anything of that kind" (ch. 11). When Edward Rochester appears for the first time in *Jane Eyre*, he is likewise pointedly introduced as not heroic: "Had he been a handsome, heroic-looking young gentleman, I should not have dared to stand thus questioning him against his will, and offering my services unasked" (ch. 12). The narrator Jane thus states in the form of a counterfactual conditional that Edward Rochester is not "heroic-looking." Yet, even in its negation, the concept of "hero" is evoked, and Mr Rochester indeed turns out to become Jane's hero in the end. This happens after a second candidate, St. John Rivers, is shown to be a hero in the sense of heroic; he has an "heroic" aspect and the character of a Christian hero, and this is exactly why he does not qualify as Jane's hero:

> Now, I did not like this, reader. St. John was a good man; but I began to feel he had spoken truth of himself when he said he was hard and cold. The humanities and amenities of life had no attraction for him – its peaceful enjoyments no charm. Literally, he lived only to aspire – after what

was good and great, certainly; but still he would never rest, nor approve of others resting round him. As I looked at his lofty forehead, still and pale as a white stone – at his fine lineaments fixed in study – I comprehended all at once that he would hardly make a good husband: that it would be a trying thing to be his wife. […] I saw he was of the material from which nature hews her heroes – Christian and Pagan – her lawgivers, her statesmen, her conquerors: a steadfast bulwark for great interests to rest upon; but, at the fireside, too often a cold cumbrous column, gloomy and out of place. (ch. 34)

Unlike Willoughby and Mr Crosbie, St. John Rivers is, as Jane remarks, truly heroic, but his place is not "the fireside", which does not make him a good husband. Two different connections between meanings of "hero" are thus linked in *Jane Eyre*: Mr Rochester, like Mr Thornton, becomes the protagonist's hero because he is not heroic, while St. John Rivers's Christian heroism makes him unable to become this kind of hero.

Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* constitutes an exception to this pattern. Responding to her uncle's question if "the sort of individual [she] would prefer as a husband" was "paint[ed] from the life", Shirley first wittily remarks that

[i]t was an historical picture, uncle, from several originals. […] I have been in love several times. […] With heroes of many nations. […] Once I loved Socrates. […] I admired Themistocles, Leonidas, Epaminondas. (ch. 31)

While these comments to her uncle's questions, which she regards as insolent, have to be taken with a grain of salt and are interspersed with her uncle's shocked comments, her later remarks on her actual "hero", the man she wants to marry, are much more serious in tone. When her uncle inquires if she loves Mr Helstone, Shirley remarks:

Their very faces are not dissimilar – a pair of human falcons – and dry, direct, decided both. But my hero is the mightier of the two. His mind has the clearness of the deep sea, the patience of its rocks, the force of its billows. (ch. 31)

Shirley's hero is thus also heroic in her opinion, and this is what makes him appealing to her.[12]

The findings show that our method triggers further questions and hypotheses that make us update our annotation categories: having isolated the "hero(ine) 3" cases and considered their relationship to the other two, we realize that we can subdivide this category quite clearly by separating the cases with a personal pronoun in an intradiegetic utterance: "my hero" is a subtype of "hero(ine) 3" that frequently only applies to the person in question and is not what is commonly (or by others) called a hero(ine) of that type. (By contrast, the metadiegetic use of the first person pronoun by the narrator indicates a hero(ine) 1.)

Concluding remarks and unexpected results

Our method of annotating a corpus of nineteenth-century novels on the basis of the ambiguity of "hero" and its cognates has produced combinations and causal or conditional links between the meanings which form patterns within and between novels that help us understand them better in terms of genre and relation to the actual world. In particular, we have noticed paradoxical relations: someone is only a hero(ine) if s/he is not a hero(ine) or s/he is not a hero(ine) if s/he is a hero(ine), paradoxes which may be explained by the different meanings of the word. In terms of poetics and genre, the paradoxes suggest two conclusions: (1) the ambiguous word "hero(ine)" is used by writers to claim originality (their protagonists are different from typical protagonists); (2) "hero(ine)" is used to claim a more appropriate representation of reality; their protagonists are not "heroic" in a positive or negative ("anti-hero") sense. While the latter claim may have to do with our choice of realist fiction (see above), it is still worth noting that the paradoxical link is typical of that fiction. The use of "hero(ine)" enables writers to make their narratives appear both extraordinary and ordinary at the same time. Methodologically, we have made a case for the close interaction between quantitative and qualitative analyses. A quantitative analysis based on mere word counts of "hero(ine)" offers little insight. Close reading and the interpretation of individual occurrences of the different meanings of the polysemous expression, however, may be the basis of a quantitative analysis that allows us to see both general tendencies and individual features we may not have perceived otherwise.

Thus, our approach has also made us aware of certain links we had not thought about before. Three of them will be briefly described: we have noticed that a certain combination at least in one author produces irony, we surmise that the use

of "hero" can be seen as an author's signature, and we have realized that the expressions "hero" and "heroine", although we have grouped them together in our three categories, behave differently semantically.

Triggers of irony

Identifying irony is a notoriously elusive subject, especially when it comes to ambiguity (cf. Bauer, "Ironie"). Our annotations suggest that there are ways of establishing the ironical use of certain expressions through co-occurrences, at least for the same speaker/author. We have noticed that in Anthony Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, the narrator's statement, "It will be seen, therefore, that Mr John Eames had about him much of the heroic", is quite ironical, or at least ambiguously ironical. The context are certain exaggerated stories about the thrashing he gave Mr Crosbie for jilting Lily Dale in an earlier novel by Trollope, *The Small House at Allington*. Being the prototypical hero of these stories (hero(ine) 2) turns the hero(ine) 3 meaning of "heroic" into an ironical one. Correspondingly, when the second meaning of "hero" is absent, there is no irony, e.g. in this passage from *The Last Chronicle*: "With his own mother and sister, John Eames was in these days quite a hero" (ch. 27). This is further confirmed by another statement from the same novel, "I never quite knew what makes a hero, if it isn't having three or four girls dying in love for you at once" (ch. 74). The speaker here ironically questions the very concept of being a hero by taking recourse to prototypical heroes; the reader may once more think of Gay's Captain Macheath when it comes to defining a hero by the number of girls dying in love for him simultaneously.

The use of "hero" as an author's signature

As a side effect of our annotations, we noticed that certain constructions are distributed unequally over the authors. In particular, the construction "the hero of N" with N as a temporal noun has been found in one author, Trollope, in particular. Of the 176 cases of "hero" and "heroine" in our corpus, there are only six with such a temporal complement, four of which are in the two novels by Trollope. Three of the four instances are identical: "the hero of the hour"; one of them is "the hero of the moment." All four of them are spoken

about, or with reference to, John Eames, a character who appears in both *The Small House at Allington* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset.* This agrees with the ironical use of "hero" in Trollope; as we have seen, John Eames is ambiguously heroic: not a forthright hero in our senses 2 and 3, and not an anti-hero either, but a man who arguably acts heroically in a very few moments of his life. This particular (realistic) concept seems a hallmark of Trollope's novels. A comparison of the *Delphi Classics* texts[13] of Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, George Eliot, Gaskell, and Thackeray shows that Trollope uses the phrase "the hero of the hour" 15 times in his novels, whereas it is nowhere to be found in the novels by Austen, Brontë, Dickens, Eliot, and Thackeray. Gaskell uses it once – in *Sylvia's Lovers*, a novel that is to some extent a response to Trollope's *The Warden* (see O'Gorman).

Methodologically, our observation is relevant to the link between phrases and concepts and may contribute to developing further a concept of determining stylistic author profiles that goes beyond stylometric author identification. It is an example of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, i.e. quantitative methods 'making sense.' While quantitative analysis may capture a five-gram that is almost unique for a particular author (and may therefore serve to identify that author),[14] the meaning of that unique feature (beyond being just a stylistic habit) can only be established by analysing it as the expression of a particular notion.

The difference between hero and heroine

The initial close reading of our examples seemed to indicate a difference in the ways in which the terms "hero" and "heroine" were employed. This assumption was supported by explicit comments by narrators and characters in some of our novels, as in the following passage in which Shirley and Caroline discuss the difference between women "as we really are" and prototypical literary heroines. Shirley argues that even

> the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women. They do not read them in a true light; they misapprehend them, both for good and evil. Their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend. Then to hear them fall into ecstasies with each other's creations – worshipping the heroine of such a poem,

novel, drama – thinking it fine, divine! Fine and divine it may be, but often quite artificial – false as the rose in my best bonnet there. (ch. 20)

In response to Caroline's claim that "authors' heroines are almost as good as authoresses' heroes", Shirley wittily answers that "[w]omen read men more truly than men read women" (ch. 20).

Our data were accordingly annotated in a way that allowed us to find out if a difference can be observed between the usage of the terms "hero" and "heroine", which turned out to be the case. The numbers in the following table represent the absolute number of times "hero" and "hero(ine)" was used in a specific sense (**tab. 3**).

If "hero" and "heroine" are taken together, the prevalent meaning by far is "heroic human being." Separating the data for the two terms results in a very different picture. The term "heroine" is used only ten times in this sense (16.1% of all uses of "heroine"), whereas the same meaning for "hero" appears in 95 cases (88%). At the same time, "heroine" takes on the meaning of "prototypical literary character" 33 times and "hero" (which is overall used much more frequently) only 27 times. A simple way to explain these results would be that the term "hero" denoting a heroic character or deeds can be used for male and female characters alike, as can be seen for instance in *Jane Eyre* where Helen Burns is likened to a "hero" rather than a heroine (ch. 7), whereas "heroine" is reserved for women. Yet, at least in our corpus, this rarely appears to be the case. Additional factors might be at play which may explain this discrepancy. The adjective "heroic" instead of the nouns "hero" or "heroine", for instance, seems to be mostly employed to describe the heroism of female characters, which may point to different concepts of heroism that relate to specific character traits and heroic behavior in everyday life rather than exceptional deeds in the public sphere (compare pp. 16-17).

The data for ambiguous instances of the terms "hero" and "heroine" furthermore show that there are only nine text passages that employ this device to address the tension between the meanings "protagonist" and "prototypical literary character" for male characters, while there are 26 instances in which this is the case for the term hero(ine) (**tab. 4**).

In our ten novels, female characters seem to be more often compared to images of prototypical literary hero(in)es than male characters. A similar picture emerges for the linguistic constructions in which the terms "hero" and "heroine" are used. Genitive constructions such as "a heroine of genteel comedy" frequently appear in the data (23 cases), as do terms from the semantic field of fiction ("romance", "poetry", "novel", etc.). Indeed, such terms are mentioned in reference to the term "heroine" in five novels by four of our authors (*Shirley*, *North and South, Wives and Daughters, Northanger Abbey*, and *Vanity Fair*), but there are only few similar cases in our corpus for "hero." By contrast, adjectives like "great", "military", and "chivalrous" often denote male "heroes." Accordingly, the linguistic data support the overall impression of a general tendency of relating the term "hero" (and male characters) to the sense of a heroic human being (be it affirmatively or ironically), while female "heroines" are mostly compared to prototypical patterns of fiction. The most remarkable difference between "hero" and "heroine" is therefore not the one between traditionally "male" and "female" features but between life and literature.

	Hero(ine) 1 Protagonist	Hero(ine) 2 Prototypical literary character	Hero(ine) 3 Heroic human being
hero + heroine	73	60	105
heroine	48	33	10
hero	25	27	95

	Hero(ine) 1+2	Hero(ine) 1+3	Hero(ine) 2+3	Hero(ine) 1+2+3
hero + heroine	35	15	17	5
heroine	26	3	0	0
hero	9	12	17	5

Table 3 (above) and table 4 (below).

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Matthias Bauer is Professor of English at the University of Tübingen, Germany. His research interests include literary semantics, poetics, literature and language, literature and religion, early modern literature, and the literature and culture of the nineteenth century. He is the chair of the Research Training Group 1808 "Ambiguity: Production and Perception", funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Lisa Ebert is a postdoctoral research fellow at the English department at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Her research interests include the literature of the nineteenth century and the points of intersection in the studies of literature and linguistics. She recently completed her dissertation, "Ambiguity in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*", in the Research Training Group 1808 "Ambiguity: Production and Perception".

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1   Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* is the most obvious example of Carlyle's mixing seriousness with humour and wordplay; see e.g. Bloom.

2   Carlyle's conception of heroes is, of course, far from the only one in the nineteenth century and is not necessarily representative. Notions of what constitutes a hero underwent considerable changes in the Victorian era as Andrew Blake notes in *Reading Victorian Fiction*: "Whereas in 1838 Harriet Martineau had trouble finding a publisher for *Deerbrook,* because its hero was a surgeon and its heroine came from Birmingham, by 1851 a reviewer in *Fraser's Magazine* welcomed a novel precisely because 'it is perfectly quiet, domestic and truthful [...] there is nothing irreconcilable with everyday experience'" (73).

3   In their introduction to *Heroes and Heroism in British Fiction Since 1800*, Korte and Lethbridge likewise comment on the ambiguity of the term hero(ine), and the meanings of "hero" they identify can be related to our three types of hero(ine). They note that "[t]he hero in literature is, to a large extent, determined or at least restricted by genre conventions", i.e. "[c]ertain genres require certain types of heroes" (cf. our type 2) and they remark that "[t]he main character of a narrative", our type 1, "has a good chance of also becoming a hero in the proper sense of the word", which corresponds to our type 3 (6).

4   Korte and Lethbridge note that "[c]onceptualisations of 'the hero' are not fixed […] but dynamic and fluent. They oscillate between extraordinary and more ordinary varieties: between views of the hero as model of perfection and the hero as outlaw or criminal made good; between transcendent, transgressive and more domestic types" (2). Yet, the questions we are interested in primarily concern the terms "hero" and "heroine" and only in a second step the concepts they stand for in each example. Thus, it is more important for our purposes that a character is called a "hero" (relative use) than if he or she can and should indeed be regarded as a hero or anti-hero as a result of specific character features, acts or other forms of behaviour (absolute use). For a discussion of general features of heroism and a typology of anti-heroes and other non-heroic figures see for instance Bröckling's "Negationen des Heroischen." Bröckling specifies four dimensions of heroism (heroes are role models, they are admired, they have agency and are ready to make sacrifices; 10) and three modalities of how heroism can be negated (quantitative privation, qualitative opposition, and categorial

difference; 10). Some of the resulting categories could be applied to our ten novels (Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* could, for instance, be regarded as a representative of Bröckling's category of the "Wannabe"; as Bröckling himself however remarks, his typology is ahistorical; 11-13). Furthermore, the distinction between different meanings of "hero" and "heroine" in the three senses of protagonist, prototypical literary character and heroic human being are crucial for our study of ambiguity, while the different types of hero or anti-hero fall under just one of the senses of "hero(ine)" that we address.

5   Korte, "Konzeptionen" 13 refers to Braun and his notion of a "polysémie du concept du héros." In our definition, polysemy is a feature of (linguistic) signs (e.g. of the term "hero"), whereas concepts may be underspecified or vague.

6   See, for instance, Gius and Jacke.

7   While all ten texts in our corpus may be considered realist novels, they cover a wide range of types of realist fiction. It was crucial for us that all texts in our corpus play with the ambiguity of "hero(ine)." As a foil, we annotated two popular Victorian Penny Dreadfuls, Thomas Preskett Prest's *Varney the Vampire or The Feast of Blood* and George W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London*. The terms "hero" and "heroine" frequently appear in them but they almost always unambiguously refer to one type of hero, mostly to the protagonist (e.g. "The object of our hero's call was speedily explained"; *Mysteries of London* vol. 1, ch. 130).

8   See Mahlberg (43-44) for a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of using Project Gutenberg texts for a corpus study of literary works.

9   This number includes a chapter title (XXXVI. "SEE, THE CONQUERING HERO COMES."), which is also included in the table of contents but only counted once.

10   The categories in our tables represent all cases in which at least the specified meanings are evoked. This means, for instance, that the column "h1" (= hero type 1) contains all instances in which "hero(ine)" refers to a protagonist, even when other meanings are simultaneously evoked.

11   Compare Wilson's "The Hero and the Other Man in Jane Austen's Novels" for a detailed discussion of the pattern of two potential candidates for marriage, one of whom eventually becomes the protagonist's spouse in Austen's novels. Wilson notes a pattern for the works of Jane Austen that our corpus analysis shows for other novels as well. She argues that "[o]ften, the other man is played against a hero who suffers, at least initially, by comparison. How many young women, or readers, would find Edward Ferrars or Colonel Brandon as exciting, as romantic, or even interesting, as Willoughby?" (182). She adds that "[t]he other man may glitter and entrance but he is not made of the stuff which augurs a companionable partnership and domestic tranquility. By contrasting the hero and the other man, Austen shows the qualities she deems requisite in a husband. As the other man loses stature, the hero gains it" (183).

12   See Morris for an analysis of hero-worship in *Shirley*. Morris's article details Charlotte Brontë's interest in Carlyle and argues that "Brontë was also venturing herself in the role that Carlyle characterized as that of the modern hero: the hero as man or – in her case – as woman of letters" (307).

13   The Delphi Classics texts provide comprehensive collections (in both Kindle and ePub formats) that facilitate author-specific searches; see https://www.delphiclassics.com/; though not error-free, the texts are fairly reliable.

14   For n-grams as a stylometric method of author identification, see e.g. Juola 265-266; Taylor; Bauer and Zirker, "Shakespeare and Stylometrics."

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