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## Interpreting the *Dæmonicon*: A Decade of Teaching Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*

Jessica Allen Hanssen

### Abstract

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy reinvigorated the high fantasy genre, not least by his invention of the dæmon. In this article I argue that the dæmon concept, when applied as a drawing exercise in the teacher education context, provides important insight into the vast diversity of interests, feelings, and values of ELT student teachers as they prepare to enter their chosen profession. From the years 2007-2017, approximately 200 university students were invited to draw a representation of their 'dæmon'. The drawings, assembled and analysed as a data set based on markers such as the student teachers' gender, as well as by content, size, and relative creativity, allow certain patterns and tendencies to become visible, and individual drawings also serve as important reflection points on the novel and the nature of teaching literature. *Northern Lights*, the first book of *His Dark Materials* trilogy, makes for excellent reading, and is also a helpful book to use in the teacher education context, to help student teachers learn the conventions of the fantasy genre and understand how knowledge of the genre can enhance their teaching practice. This article therefore presents a long-term learning activity connected to teaching *Northern Lights*, as a way into working with genre conventions, and also as a point of departure on the subject of the importance of self-reflection in the literature classroom's interpretative community.

**Keywords:** fantasy, Philip Pullman, teacher education, interpretative community, reflection

**Jessica Allen Hanssen** is Associate Professor of English at Nord University, Norway, where she is director of the Bachelor of English degree. Among other responsibilities, she teaches young adult literature for students in teacher education and has recently published articles on the American writers Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as on pedagogical approaches to teaching young adult dystopian novels.

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## Introduction

Following the 2017 publication of *The Book of Dust: La Belle Sauvage*, British author Philip Pullman is back at the forefront of the literary world, with nearly 500 pages of gripping and undeniably rich storytelling, adding colour and depth to the universe he had created in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. The book does not pull back from showing the adult world as a foreboding, conspiratorial place, and yet it also demonstrates the power that one child can have, in this case protagonist Malcolm Colstead, to change the universe for the better when given the right kind of support. It is an appealing idea in a time where many of us – younger and older readers alike – are trying to figure out what we can do to continue to inspire and motivate children in a time of relative economic and social uncertainty.

It makes sense, in this context, that fantasy would be having a cultural moment, but this trend does not come from nowhere. The 1990s and early 2000s represented a kind of renaissance in the fantasy genre (Butler & Reynolds, 2014, pp. 31-4), and interest in fantasy among schoolchildren has never been higher. We need only look at the enduring popularity of series such as *Harry Potter*, *Artemis Fowl*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and their numerous descendants, to understand the cultural impact fantasy is having. Wise teachers who want to encourage teenagers to read and enjoy fiction are embracing fantasy, rather than shying away from it as sub-standard genre fiction, and using it as a vehicle for exploring narrative conventions as well as a way into discussing values and social issues. Melissa Thomas (2003) outlines ‘two facts about fantasy that make it perfect classroom fodder: 1. Students like it. 2. It is a metaphor for the human condition – ripe with mythic structures, heroic cycles, and social and religious commentary’. The first is perhaps a given, but the second is up to the teacher to demonstrate and put to good advantage.

*Northern Lights* is especially innovative in the fantasy genre, not least for its creation of the *dæmon*, which has been referred to as ‘the most delicious and seductive and intriguing innovation for children that could be imagined’ (Hitchens, 2002, np), and inevitably triggers the question ‘what is my *dæmon*?’ among youth and adult readers alike. The ‘undetermined potential of children’, as represented by the shape-shifting *dæmon* must eventually settle into a fixed form, and ‘with the support of [...] adult friends and carers’ (Rustin & Rustin, 2011), the transformation from child to adult as represented by the *dæmon* becomes intensely compelling. While heroine Lyra Belacqua does not have the benefit of a stable home or school environment to support this transformation, various helpers and carers along the way

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– Ma Costa, the seaman, and (later) Dr Mary Malone – offer their guidance and counsel. There is a certain implicit cycle here: everyone in the *His Dark Materials* universe is, at some point, both teacher and a student. Likewise, in a teacher education environment, we are simultaneously asking future teachers to imagine themselves at the front of the room as leaders and caretakers, while also asking them to accept their place as our students. This juxtaposition creates a moment of fluidity and temporary uncertainty, and this can be a good thing.

*Northern Lights*, which is the first book of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, makes for excellent stand-alone reading in the modern fantasy genre, and as such has become a popular choice for secondary and upper-secondary students to read and explore at school, particularly for upper-secondary readers in ELT. While the book has been banned in some American school districts due to its implicit criticism of organized religion, it is exactly this controversy which makes it appealing as a springboard for discussion in, for example, Scandinavian school environments that are dealing with the impact of issues such as xenophobia, class disparity, and religious differences in new ways. Teachers have a certain freedom to choose literature that supports their interpretation of curricular goals, rather than having texts prescribed by a national, regional, or school governance. To illustrate, one can look to the school curricula in Norway and Sweden: In Norway, middle grades English teachers, up through year 10, are asked to produce lessons that ‘use different situations, working methods and learning strategies to develop one’s English-language skills’ and that enable learners to ‘read, understand and evaluate different types of texts of varying degrees on different topics’ (Utdanningsdirktoratet, 2013, pp. 10-11). In Sweden the national curriculum for English asks that the school, ‘as well as being open to different ideas and encouraging their expression, [...] should also emphasize the importance of forming personal opinions and provide pupils with opportunities for doing this’ (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 8). In this relatively open setting, and with the relatively high English level that Norwegian and other Nordic schools foster, that additionally is heavily supplemented by out-of-school learning experiences (EF EPI, 2017), a book like *Northern Lights* is not immediately too difficult for school use, and in fact represents an economical investment of time in terms of achieving curricular goals: the book is so rich with creative, interpretative, and interdisciplinary possibilities that it can generate endless language production.

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### Teaching and Self-Reflexivity

Lyra Belacqua, the young protagonist of *Northern Lights*, has to learn how to use the alethiometer – the magical golden compass that can foretell the future – all by herself before she can begin to explain it to others. It is an intuitive process: she has to focus inward in order to achieve outward movement on the compass's dial. Not everyone can achieve this kind of deep self-reflexivity, never mind be able to organize it into logical sequences. And even when Lyra can make the dials move to one of the 24 symbols on the compass, each symbol must then be interpreted, and again connected to each other. This is rather similar to the way a teacher must learn their room of 24 pupils or more, and the way that each pupil interacts with the others, in order to make effective choices about how to organize group activities, or how to best approach the needs of a certain pupil.

In order to fully embrace the fantasy trend, and to take advantage of the openness of the Scandinavian national school curricula, it is important for future teachers to feel comfortable working with fantasy literature on a sophisticated and informed level, as many of their future pupils are rather interested in the genre, and others have a lot to gain by becoming interested in it. It is also important, due to the various questions raised by a complex modern fantasy novel, that future teachers feel comfortable publicly expressing themselves as unique, creative, and inspirational figures. To this end, I can think of no better entrance to the communicative nature of teaching literature than asking students to imagine – and then draw – their own dæmons.

From the years 2007-2017, I invited nearly 200 university students to draw a representation of their 'dæmon'. The drawings, assembled into a collection that has come to be known as the *Dæmonomicon*, form a kind of time capsule that provides insight into of the vast diversity of interests, feelings, and values of teacher students. Certain patterns and tendencies are visible when the collection is seen as a whole, and individual drawings also serve as important reflection points on the novel and the nature of teaching literature to young readers. Pre-service teachers, themselves frequently just past being school students themselves, face unanswered questions about their adult identity, including their future profession, and the dæmon drawings may help them form a fixed, adult image of their experiences, talents, and potential, in a way that feels authentically in the moment, and liberated from adult pressures. This activity forms a natural intersection of my two interest areas: literary criticism and secondary school teacher education. Analysis of and reflection

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on the *Dæmonicon* in connection to my ten years of teaching *Northern Lights* has allowed me to generate new insights into the nature of becoming a literature teacher.

### **Philosophical and Theoretical Framework**

Robert Crossley (1975, p. 281) explains that for a discussion of fantasy, ‘the proper beginning point *is* in the emblems, the metaphors, the haziness, the elusive circularity with which so many readers of fantasy articulate their responses’ (emphasis in the original). Learning how to properly articulate a response to something you yourself love is indeed challenging, because one has to be able to do more than just be a fan: one has to be able and willing to explain *why* and *how* a given text works, not just that it does, and on a level that is appropriate for the given classroom audience. I have therefore always prefaced my class discussion of the novel with information on the history, popularity, and genre conventions of fantasy literature. Much of this material is familiar to my students as fans of the genre, but rarely have they thought about what it would take to convey their personal enthusiasm for fantasy literature to their future students in a way that reinforces second-language learning.

One aspect of the genre that I like to work with in this situation is the quest archetype, which Joseph Campbell explored in depth in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949, p. 23) using the term monomyth, a universal story of a hero’s trial, discovery, and ritual homecoming that forms the basis of most high fantasy. If this is our definition, then teacher education also functions as a quest of sorts. Consider Thomas Foster’s statement (2003, p. 3) on the archetypal fantasy hero’s reason for undertaking the quest at hand: ‘They go because of the stated task, mistakenly believing that it is their real mission. We know, however, that their quest is educational. They don’t know enough about the only subject that really matters: themselves’. In *Northern Lights*, Lyra and her dæmon Pantalaimon initially believe that they are on a quest to bring the alethiometer to her uncle, Lord Asriel, but her trials and ordeals along the way, in which she proves herself to be relentlessly tough and unselfish, teach her to trust her instincts, leading to her eventual victory against the false king of the polar bears, a victory which in turn leads her to some fairly significant personal discoveries, and it is *those* discoveries that matter in the end. Her dæmon changes form according to the situation at hand. Sometimes Pantalaimon becomes a bird, sometimes a mouse, sometimes a dolphin (later in the trilogy we discover that Pantalaimon ‘settles’ as a

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red-gold marten, an animal whose name he doesn't even know when it happens). A typical teacher student, at least here in Norway, is in an interesting liminal state between having an unsettled and settled form, so to speak, and the idea of the *dæmon* is perhaps especially appealing in this context.

The idea of the *dæmon* is also metaphorically interesting in regard to the developing teacher in terms of the realities of what they will eventually understand, if not as a direct part of their training, but as an indirect result of their experience. There is so much more to school, and thus to being a teacher, than the daily lesson plan, and the new teacher has to first learn the values of their new school, figure out how their own knowledge and values fit into it, and then find ways of engaging with those values as they enter the lives of their young pupils, and also deal with complex issues as they arise. Explicit self-knowledge is a kind of cultural capital that, once understood, can help insure against unconsciously reinforcing the idea that everyone needs to be the same, by sharpening the teacher's sense of empathy. Confronting one's own hopes, fears, and biases helps the teacher have an early awareness of various potential pitfalls, and is an early step toward engaging a pluralistic learning environment. Henry Giroux (1988) writes of a hidden curriculum, which he describes as 'those unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of a given class' (51). The idea of the *dæmon*, and the personal awareness it symbolizes, takes one element of Giroux's hidden curriculum (the teacher's place in the classroom structure) and makes it visible and colourful, and therefore less manipulative, which can be a formative and lasting reminder of a teacher's unique role in their classroom. There is much literature on the value of drawing as a pre- or post-storytelling activity for children – I'm interested in it as a pre-narrative activity for *adult* learners, whereupon the narrative in question is the quest toward becoming an English teacher.

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

The sample for the observations to follow – the *Dæmonicon* – is composed of 188 drawings collected from 10 Young Adult Fiction (YA) classes at the Faculty of Education and Arts of Nord University, Norway, over the years 2007-2017<sup>1</sup>. Teacher certification in Norway is divided into grades 1-7, 5-10 and 11-13 (www.udir.no). These classes were primarily meant for future lower- and mid-secondary English teachers, where YA would be especially relevant as a second-language and literature teaching tool. However, due to its

being a smaller programme, some students who wished to become grade 1-7 teachers are also blended in. Students were asked to produce drawings to represent their dæmon, based on having previously read *Northern Lights* and their consequent understanding of the basic concept of the dæmon as a special character type. No other preparation was provided to the students; they did not know that this activity would be a part of the class, as a spontaneous reaction to the idea of drawing a dæmon was sought. Students were advised that their choices were not limited to 'real' animals, but could combine elements of several animals, or could even be entirely imaginary. Students were given approximately 15 minutes to execute the drawings, and were provided with a selection of coloured pencils, crayons, and markers to use. If they had remaining time, students were asked to write down some key words to help explain why they chose a particular creature as their dæmon.

After students were finished drawing, they were asked if there was anyone who felt comfortable showing their drawings to the class, and explaining a little about why they chose a certain animal to represent their dæmon. This part of the class was always lively and positive, with students encouraging each other to participate. At the end of the discussion, they were informed that a small collection of drawings was being saved for future research purposes, and they were welcome, but not required, to allow their drawings to be saved as a part of this. Most students accepted this offer, fully aware that their drawings would eventually be used for qualitative and quantitative research purposes, although some students did not want to participate and chose to retain their drawings. Students who wished that their drawings be collected were asked to write their name on the drawing. Having names on the drawings meant that gender could be identified, and also enabled future contact in the event that questions about their drawing arose. Where specific anonymized students are quoted, these former (and in one case current) students were contacted directly via email to comment on their drawing in the context of their current teaching practice, and they have given permission for their drawings and/or statements to appear. There were no significant ethical concerns in the process of this data collection or its analysis.

Of the 188 drawings that compose the *Dæmonomicon*, 119 (63 per cent) were drawn by female students, and 69 (37 per cent) were drawn by male students. This distribution neatly matches the overall national statistic for teacher students (grades 5-10) in Norway, where in the last recorded academic year of 2016-17, approximately 63 per cent are female and 37 per cent are male (Mellingsæther, 2017). At my home university (Nord University,



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Campus Bodø), 66 per cent are female and 33 per cent of teacher students are male (DBH, 2017), and so the *Dæmonicon*'s gender distribution is also reasonably representative, but not a perfect match, for the current male/female student ratio.

### Findings

By far, the single most popular dæmon chosen by students is the cat. Big cats, small cats, wild cats, and the most popular choice of all, the grey housecat. Being more of a dog person myself, it is hard for me to understand why, when given the choice of any animal in the known or imaginary universe, students would gravitate toward ordinary and boring housecats as their creative expression of themselves. And yet, 47 (25 per cent) of students picked some form of cat as their dæmon, with a gender distribution of 13 male and 34 female. They must see something in cats that I do not. Looking at the key words to describe the qualities of a cat, students who selected cats frequently chose 'independent', 'calm', and 'intelligent' to describe them, words which all lend themselves well to the classroom, where young learners turn to their teachers not only as language models but as role models (Pinter, 2015, p. 6). One student who chose a cat dæmon and listed those exact three reasons, and who is now working as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, remarked:

Having worked as a full-time teacher for about one and a half years now, I have learned a bit about myself as a teacher [...] As a teacher you are constantly put in situations where you need to make quick decisions, and preferably the right decisions, so being able to stay calm in moments of stress is in my opinion a good quality for a teacher to have. As for 'intelligent', I would probably change this quality to being 'knowledgeable'. Intelligent sounds, in one way, that you are superior to everyone around you (in this case the students) and in my mind, that doesn't invite for a good learning environment. As a teacher I want to be someone the students view as knowledgeable and as someone who can apply wisdom, but also a teacher who is open to learn from the students.





Figure 1: A Cat Dæmon

Another, a more experienced teacher who is now teaching grades 8-9, commented in depth:

Now I think that the ability to work as part of a team, to adjust and adapt, might be more important as a teacher than being independent. It takes a village, or at least a team of teachers and assistants, to give the pupils or students a proper education.

But I am independent when I go all the way to meet the student's needs, even if my fellow teacher disagrees with me, when I am fighting the system to give the students the resources and help they need. At work I am fighting every day to make room for more literature in English class. I am also independent when I am with a troubled class who likes to challenge me, or special students who act provoking or threatening or are name calling. The latter happens rarely. Still, in these situations it is important to remember your own self-worth and that you know you are good at your job, that you are independent and strong.

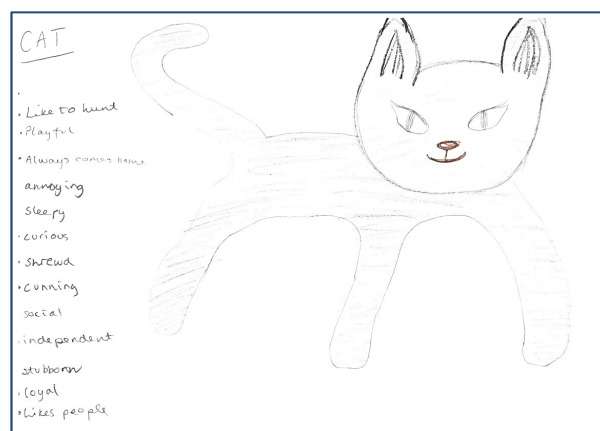


Figure 2: Another Cat Dæmon

It is pleasing to note that this student has recently succeeded in introducing more literature into her English class, and even read an entire novel as a class activity.

Likewise, another student, who drew a lion for her dæmon in 2013 and now teaches adult education, reports:

For one thing, you have to be able to take charge (hence the male lion), as a teacher you are the engine in the classroom leading the way with the students. You show them the path, and they follow. Another experience I got through the years is that being a teacher takes courage. It is not always easy, having to confront students as well as parents in difficult times. And most important; a lion is a pack leader. I feel very much the same for a teacher. Not only are you the leader of the class, but you need the class on your side, as a team, so brute force will get you nowhere, but trust, co-work and team effort is a basis for a good environment in the class.



Figure 3: A Lion Dæmon

Like the lion she chose to represent her, it is important for this teacher to be a careful and considerate leader, but a leader nonetheless. All of this is to say that perhaps being a ‘cat person’ should be a job prerequisite for teaching.

*Northern Lights*, in an explanatory note at the beginning of the novel, claims to be set in ‘a universe like ours, but different in many ways’, and ‘The North’ is a prominent trope and setting throughout the novel. Names like Bolvanger or Serafina Pekkala, words like *panserbjørn* (armored bear), and even the phenomenon of the *aurora borealis* that gives

the novel its name are all a part of the novel's otherworldly Arctic setting. But what comes across to an American, Central European or UK reader as an exotic otherworld is a part of everyday life in Norway, where the Northern Lights can be seen on any given clear, cold evening, and while polar bears are admittedly only in the most remote parts, they do exist on more than just soft-drink advertising or at the zoo. In this case, it is perhaps no surprise that Arctic animals, especially wolves, foxes, and eagles, occupy significant space in the *Dæmonicon*, with 51 students (27.12 per cent) choosing to draw some variant of these. One student, who spent 5 years after his education teaching grades 5-7 and who chose an eagle as his dæmon back in 2012, reports the following changes:

I think some of the things I thought about teacher-wise were being able to observe what is going on around you as a teacher. Being able to interpret and react to all those things flying by... all things from passing notes under the desk, to noting how somebody would twitch or turn or momentarily look away when they feel threatened in the classroom. Attention to detail has changed for my part. I thought I knew more than I actually did, and still learn again and again the subtleties of being humble with what one knows and what is still to be learned. Those things I do know continually change or adjust, so I have to be able to notice new things (for example in student behaviour). I guess the eagle is kind of the perspective I try to keep, to be on top of it all, staying calm and balanced.

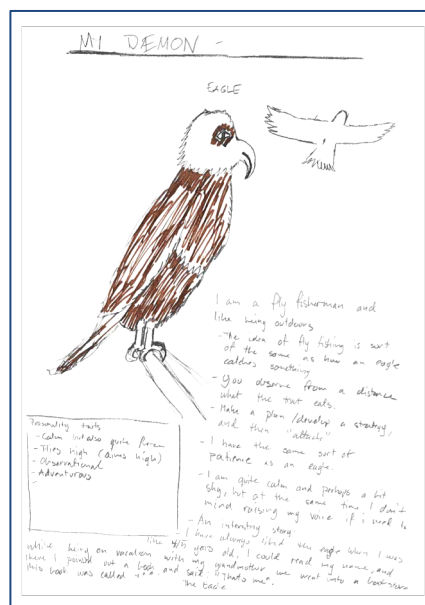


Figure 4: An Eagle Dæmon

It is interesting to note that this teacher just this year decided to change careers, and is now a pedagogical leader at a preschool, a position that in Norway requires teacher credentials, and, given the target age group, perhaps even more attention to detail. He is still watching, and still learning.

As a sub-category to the Arctic animals, I noticed an interesting phenomenon as I studied the collection of drawings: since the debut of the TV series *Game of Thrones* in 2011 (based of course on books by George R.R. Martin, published since the mid-1990s), the number of dragon and wolf dæmons spiked considerably. Here we can get some insight from a first-year student (and serious *Games of Thrones* fan):

I didn't have a lot of friends, so I found comfort in my fantasy friend who also kind of happened to be a wolf. The wolf gave me comfort and made me feel safe like no person had managed so far. I remember sitting around bonfires and telling scary stories about meeting one in the woods and how they swore that they knew someone who knew someone who was eaten by a giant wolf. Everyone was so afraid of the wolves, but I was intrigued by the thought of these dangerous and yet shy animals. I used to love taking trips by myself in the woods alone, and I knew every path there was. I started by identifying myself with the lone wolf, but ended up identifying myself with a pack wolf; loyal, strong and dangerous if needs be.

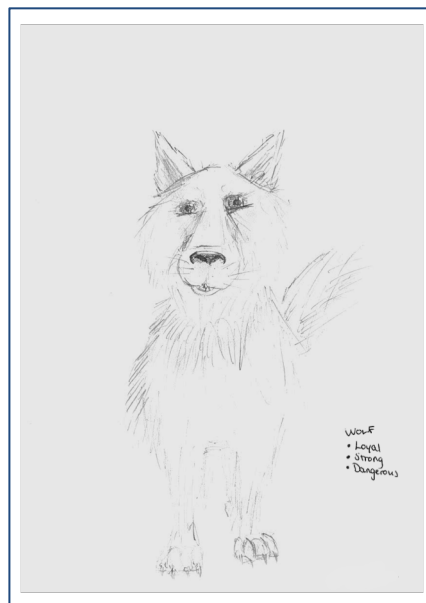


Figure 5: A Wolf Dæmon

I am now left to wonder how many Jon Snows and Daenerys Targaryens will be making their way to the classroom's iron throne... and, for that matter, who will be building that throne. An experienced teacher of English for vocational purposes, grades 10 – 11, also drew a wolf:

My background gives me more control over the choices I make in the classroom. I make my choices based on what I think is best for the student for their teaching. Sometimes I need to have a certain amount of stamina combined with patience and smartness to find the best way of transferring knowledge to my students. The wolf, as I know it, always fights for their rank in a flock. I don't do that as a teacher, as I see it. I think this maybe is related to the security in the role I have as a teacher.

I think I can understand how a wolf dæmon can guide a teacher, but, intrigued and mildly alarmed by the idea of a dragon-dæmon-guided teacher, I next reached out to one of the students who chose a dragon because it is 'wise' and 'greedy' for context. I learned that, as an assistant teacher of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, the dragon has evolved in meaning for him:

I think, over the years, the creature has changed. When I first started my assistant teaching job, the only goal and idea I had for work was to get the job done, get home as soon as possible and get paid. A couple of years later I grew more wise and less greedy. I understood how much more there was to it. I got the chance to help small humans. To help the ones who needed it a little more than others. To give something back to society. My job had a purpose, it wasn't just about myself.

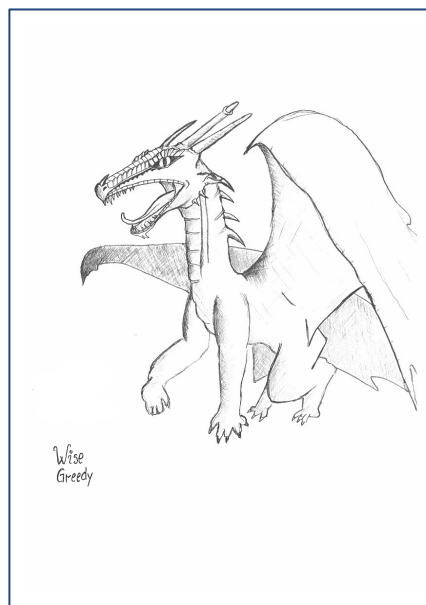


Figure 6: A Dragon Dæmon

Reflecting on the dragon dæmon gave him a concrete way to visualize and therefore come to terms with his own movement from child to adult, from student to teacher.

### Outliers

While these two categories, of cats and Arctic creatures, represent the significant majority of the dæmon drawings, there have been some notable outliers as well. These outliers represent the only version of that animal chosen in a 10-year period, attempts to combine animals and their anthropomorphic personalities, or even to create an altogether new fantastic creature. Rather than attempt to categorize these outliers, a few of them are presented here, with comments from their artists after several years of teaching.

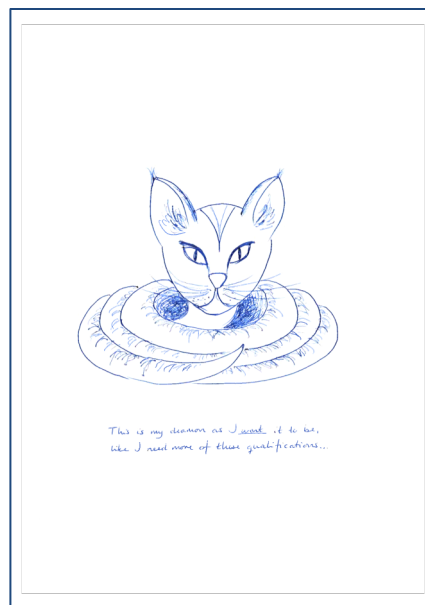


Figure 7: A Catsnake Dæmon

I used to teach middle grades but now I teach high school. ‘Catsnakeness’ is very much needed during my workday at both levels: The features of a cat in order to provide love and compassion for those many vulnerable souls in this ‘perfection generation’ and the snake to still be sly enough to help them achieve progress, both in the subject and as more self-esteemed and confident human beings. The independence of a cat is necessary to be able to make quick decisions without always relying on the help of colleagues or management. The features of a snake are needed when I ‘trick’ the students into

believing they have all the choices themselves and from that they find extra motivation to embark on new projects.



Figure 8: A Giraffe Dæmon

I guess I chose the giraffe because of its sometimes odd and funny appearance, and that it in a way resembles how I see myself – in a positive way, though. As a teacher, I can use that as an icebreaker or door opener to help engage my students. I have had many students that struggle being orally active, so not being a too strict or severe teacher is, in my opinion, a good thing. I'm a 9th and 10th grade teacher. I also work with a class of students who need extra help, those who struggle at school due to, for example, ADHD or other circumstances that affect their school day. Here, one crucial teacher quality is the ability to be calm and see the whole picture. You have to pick your battles; see what's most important to tend to and pay no attention to the rest.



Figure 9: A Hamster Dæmon



I didn't want to be a (*sic*) English teacher who just taught grammar, and can't use English in the classroom like the most of all the other old English teachers in Japan. So my goal was to change English education in Japan at that time, but it was not easy. It was only me who was speaking all English at the English class. [...] Even if I'm not working as an English teacher now, I'm teaching preschool in Norway, I still want to do something with education, but of course my philosophy has changed a lot. I'm much more relaxed and happy when I'm with kids. Definitely not like a hamster.

### Discussion

The *dæmon* drawing activity, as collected over 10 years of teaching *Northern Lights* for future English teachers revealed to me that I, as a teacher educator, have a crucial role in shaping it through coming to terms with what Dewey referred to as 'collateral learning' and expressed as 'the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes' that are motivational to continued learning and ultimately more important than the subject at hand (1938, p. 40). The *dæmon* drawings made learners momentarily vulnerable, only to enforce a later sense of self through establishing and reinforcing a reassuring and supportive interpretative community. Likewise, by being in a situation where I am expected to deliver meaningful college-level instruction on the given literature, in this case young adult and fantasy novels, as well as to simultaneously theorize on and model an exemplary grade 5–10 classroom environment, I also demonstrate a willingness to exhibit vulnerability by temporarily disrupting the norms of the university classroom, to privilege imaginative and creative processes over theoretical or critical ones. We are never too old for storytime, and we're never too old to draw a picture. The activity is a momentary cross-over of the coldly theoretical world of adult literary analysis with the fanciful world of the children's classroom, with the added, waxy tangibility of crayon on paper. It honestly feels good to hold a crayon or pencil for a few minutes and draw freely, and it's fun to watch the students engage in a pastime that is beloved in childhood but quickly deprioritized. Expressing personal values through drawing can help future teachers to understand themselves as individuals at a time of transition. In this exercise, the *dæmon* drawing functions as a kind of multimodal reinforcement of the significant themes of both the novel – independence, freedom, personal growth – and the student's individual movement from student-teacher to teacher, which also seems to reflect and require the same values. With one of the vital steps towards an informed

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response to the literary text being self-awareness (Rosenblatt, 1974), discovering and revealing their ideas about their dæmon allows student teachers to discover and reveal their own capabilities as they interpret the novel, and helps them more readily imagine themselves assisting their future pupils to discover and reveal their own capacities.

All of this is well and good, but I argue there is more to be gleaned from the *Dæmonicon* than positive vibes and feel-good platitudes in terms of the unconsciousness concerns of future teachers, and also as a meta-statement on teacher education itself. Regardless of their content, the size of the pictures also reveals something relevant about the nature of future teachers. Since everyone is given the same A4 size sheet of paper to work with, and the same amount of time to draw, it becomes interesting to observe how much of the paper's area students use to create their dæmon drawings. Studies in clinical psychology have fruitfully explored the relationship of size to emotional state in free-drawing exercises (Burkitt, Barrett & Davis, 2003; Picard & Lebaz, 2010), concluding that increased size in free-drawing exercises indicates positive feelings and decreased size indicates negative feelings. While in no way would I propose or claim that my observations approach the scientific rigour of these studies, I nevertheless do find it interesting that 76 (40.43 per cent) of the drawings take up more than half of the space on the page, and of these nearly three quarters (70.1 per cent) are drawn by women. In her famous speech-turned-essay, 'We Should all be Feminists' (2014, p. 27), Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche states 'We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller'. And yet, when it comes to the dæmon drawings, this does not seem to be the case. Since grade-school education has been a woman-dominated profession in Norway for some time now (Raabe, 2003; Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, 2018), the size of the drawings may reflect something otherwise unstated about the perceived status of women and men both as they enter their profession, and what they might unconsciously project onto their students. There are certainly possibilities for further research and discussion of these and similar concerns as related to the teacher education classroom in English as a second language.

### Conclusion

This essay endeavoured to analyse a collection of nearly 200 drawings gathered over a 10-year period, based on the genre conventions of fantasy literature and specifically the idea of

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the dæmon from Pullman's *Northern Lights*, in the context of Norwegian teacher education, in order to draw unique conclusions about the situation of student teachers during a liminal and therefore vulnerable period in their professional development. Through such an analysis, one sees how the dæmon drawing reinforces the novel's themes. In the specific context of teacher education, it also illustrates the student's individual movement from student teacher to teacher. By sharing their ideas about the origin and meaning of their dæmon in the group context within the interpretative community of the college classroom, student teachers, as they transition into teaching, may more readily imagine themselves helping their future pupils. In the fuller context of the study, in which certain clear patterns of subject and style emerge, one sees how student teachers are each unique, and yet alike – a paradox that is difficult to understand unless, like many of us, we have spent time on both sides of the classroom.

It is perhaps appropriate to conclude with some brief discussion of my own dæmon, a subject that has certainly occupied some of my creative energy for the last 10 years. If not obliged to walk around and answer questions or help students, I usually use the time that the students are given to draw dæmons to sketch out my own. I used to draw the same thing every year, a full-page representation of a tropical, spiky lizard stretched out on a sun-warmed rock and surrounded by palm trees – perhaps, upon reflection, as a kind of symbol of my perceived cultural displacement and feelings of being on display. In recent years, I have not felt the need to reproduce this image as strongly, and even altogether skipping it a couple of times. This year, however, I changed it for the first time, to a smaller, less colourful but more carefully drawn pink-and-purple owl nestled in a Norwegian fir tree, conceivably reflecting a newfound comfort and security in my adopted country and my role as guide to many. The exercise has therefore served as a powerful visual indicator of my own quest, and I am looking forward to having the owl with me for the next instalment of *The Book of Dust* and my teaching career.

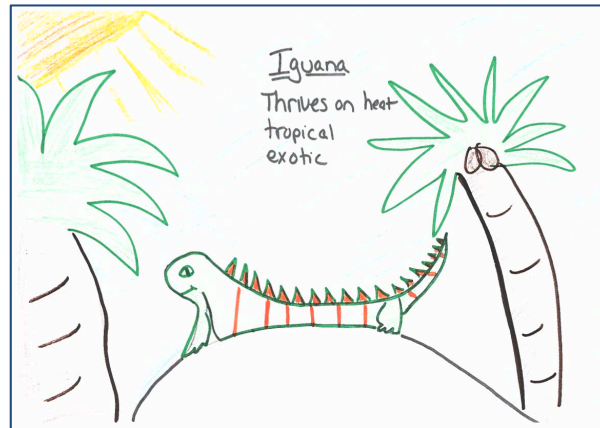


Figure 10: A Lizard Dæmon

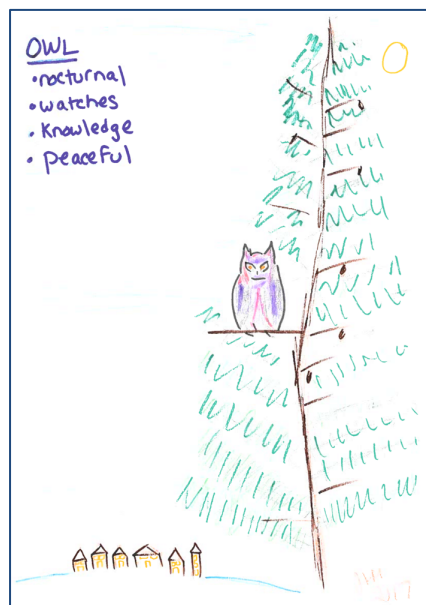


Figure 11: An Owl Dæmo

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