

Iva M. Simurdić¹
University of Novi Sad
Faculty of Philosophy

AN UNLIKELY HERO: RECONSIDERING MICHAEL ENDE'S MOMO AS A DIVINE CHILD

Abstract: The Divine Child was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung as an archetype closely linked to the process of individuation. Beyond the realm of analytical psychology, this peculiar child figure has been observed in myths and folklore and eventually evolved into a literary archetype known alternatively as das fremde Kind (the strange/alien child). Numerous child figures have since been regarded as representations of this archetype, with the titular character of Michael Ende's novel Momo (1973) being one of them. While her initial appearance is evocative of the Divine Child, over the course of the story Momo has to accept her fate as the chosen one in a battle against a mysterious foe, ultimately finding herself in the role of the hero of the story. This paper examines the traits of both the archetype of the Divine Child, as well as that of the Hero – including a variation specific to child characters – with the goal of reconsidering if Momo is truly exemplary of the archetype of the Divine Child. This is done with particular regard to Christopher Vogler's observation that literary archetypes are character functions, rather than fixed types, and as such this paper will discuss how Ende's protagonist is ultimately an example of this fluidity of functions.

Key words: *divine child, alien child, Momo, archetype, children's literature.*

The great fantasies, myths and tales
are indeed like dreams:
they speak from the unconscious to the unconscious,
in the language of the unconscious—symbol
and archetype.
(Le Guin 1992, 57)

1. Introduction

Michael Ende's novel *Momo* (1973) tells the charming tale of an orphan girl who is gifted with an extraordinary aptitude to listen and who finds herself to be the champion of good in a battle with a menacing force. The peculiar girl, quite unlike any other child figure in the story, is burdened with the task to save not only her friends, but to prevent the evil Time Saving Bank from draining the joy of life from humans everywhere. This unusual tale deals with the appreciation of idleness and importance of community, as well as with the human preoccupation with time and the almost frenetic need to avoid wasting the limited time we are granted, while we simultaneously misjudge what it is that is truly worth this most precious commodity. Unsurprisingly, the issue of time as it is presented in the novel has been the subject of much research devoted to this novel, but another point of interest has been the eponymous hero of the novel, Momo.

Momo has come to be considered a modern example of an archetype that can be traced back to the writings of Carl Gustav Jung: the Divine Child. However, upon closer inspection of the journey that the girl goes on, it becomes evident that she is no typical Divine Child. Her central role in defeating the evil that threatens her world and her desire to restore a peaceful life are motifs more commonly associated with another archetype – the Hero. It is for this reason that the following paper will re-examine how Momo has come to be considered a prime example of the Divine Child, while also taking into consideration that she might in fact be the ubiquitous Hero archetype. The structure of the paper is as follows: After an initial discussion of the meaning and history of archetypes and the archetypal approach to literature in the second section, the third section will be devoted to the archetypes of the Hero Child and Divine Child, while the fourth section will entail the analysis of the character Momo.

2. From an Unconscious Structure to a Pattern in Literature

The term *archetype* is inextricably tied to analytical psychology and thereby also to its founder, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). Moreover, it is a crucial term for the theory of the collective unconscious, which is considered to be Jung's most significant contribution to the field of analytical psychology. He postulated that the human psyche contains a layer he named the collective unconscious, a layer filled with universal structures which are the same for all humans, regardless of where they live and in what time period (Jung 1995: 3-4). These structures are what Jung calls *archetypes*.

Regarding the task of defining Jung's archetypes, Jolande Jacobi, a Jungian analyst who personally worked with him, stated that "the best we can hope to do is to suggest its general implications by *talking around it*" (Jacobi 2002: 31). Jung offered no one absolute definition of the archetype. He considered archetypes to be biological entities that are inherited from generation to generation. In *A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity*, Jung notes how archetypes exude their influence on the conscious, defining them as "factors and motifs that arrange the psychic elements into certain images, characterised as archetypal, but in such a way that they can be recognised only from the effects they produce." (Jung 1975: 140). By effects, Jung means dreams, visions, as well as everything envisioned by the human mind, as he considered it to be "the womb of all the arts and sciences" (Jung 1971: 112). Primarily by analysing dreams, but also by considering motifs and figures from folklore and art in the broadest sense, Jung identified and named numerous archetypes categorized by Stevens as being either archetypal events, figures, motifs or symbols (2012: 85). The explanation as to why these are never manifested quite the same (despite bearing clear similarities which enable their identification in the first place) lies in the fact that archetypes are "merely possibilities of images" (Vannoy Adams 2006: 108), universal and impersonal². So while every individual possesses the structure of e.g. the archetype known as Mother, our experience with this archetype will depend on our experience with the mother figure in our life, thereby varying innumerable.

Jung's writings would go on to not only influence further research into these universal structures of the psyche, but also inspire a new approach to literature whose

²Jung differentiates between the archetypal image or representation and the archetype itself. The archetype itself is the structure found in the collective unconscious. It can never be expressed in its true form, as the representation is determined by the other layers of the psyche (the personal unconscious and the conscious). Therefore, what is inherited is in actuality the potential for an archetypal representation. This distinction is not made within the scope of archetypal criticism.

aim it is to uncover universal structures that permeate literary texts across time and space – archetypal criticism³. Considering that Jung's writings contain numerous allusions and examples from art and literature, the emergence of archetypal criticism in the early 1930s comes as no surprise. At the time, the shift to analysing literary texts via close reading was relatively new and populated in academia through New Criticism. Archetypal criticism is centered on the "identification and study of recurring symbolic and mythic patterns" (Chirila 2011: 41), the archetype.

It is important to note that while many of Jung's ideas – from the universality of archetypes to the archetypes he himself discussed – were adopted by archetypal criticism, the definitions applied to analytical psychology could not remain unchanged when pertaining to literary texts. While there is once again no one absolute definition of literary archetypes, a broad one which entails the key aspects would be that they are a "typical or recurring image, character, narrative design, theme, or other literary phenomenon that has been in literature from the beginning and regularly reappears." (Lee 2000: 508) Archetypal research into literary texts tends to focus primarily on characters, in regard to which Vogler's observation that within literature, archetypes should not be perceived as fixed types, but rather as functions taken on by a character is significant. Thus, a character is not limited to being a single archetype, as it might take on the function of various ones throughout the progression of the plot (2007: 24-25). Beyond archetypal characters, there is also a notable interest in archetypal narratives, but these are more closely linked to Frye and Campbell rather than Jung.

With the application of Jung's ideas on the analysis of literary texts and with the list of archetypes expanding and evolving since he first introduced the notion, there has been plentiful research into character archetypes in literature, most notably in fantasy literature (e.g. Parker Renga & Lewis 2018, Indick 2014, Bell 2011) and, by extension, screen adaptations of such works (e.g. Graf 2015, Iaccino 1998), but their prominence has also been noted within the realm of sci-fi literature and film (e.g. Palumbo 2014, Iaccino 1998). That the fantasy genre in particular should prove to be so fruitful for archetypal criticism is far from surprising once its proximity to myth and folklore in terms of characters, motifs and narrative structures is taken into consideration. One archetype that Jung elaborated on in numerous writings and that proved to be of great significance specifically within the realm of children's

³ While all major contributors to this approach – Bodkin, Campbell and Frye – do mention Jung in their writings, and despite the fact that they do apply the idea of the archetype as a common structure by which a connection is forged between various texts, it would be wrong to call them Jungian, as fundamental differences related to the idea of the archetype are present.

fantasy literature is the archetype of the Child, which is closely linked to perhaps the most ubiquitous archetype in literature: the Hero.

3. Unusual Children, Unlikely Heroes: The Hero and the Divine Child

Jung deals with the Child archetype extensively in *The Psychology of the Child Archetype*, stating that it “represents the preconscious, childhood aspect of the collective psyche” (Jung 1955: 161) and associates it with unity, as it can also symbolise the “synthesis of the personality” (Jung 1955: 165). Regarding the representations of this archetype, Jung differentiates between the Hero Child and the God – or Divine – Child. Inherent to both is a miraculous birth, childhood-abandonment and danger through persecution. The Divine Child is associated with hermaphroditism⁴, although in literature this more commonly manifests as androgyny. Jung sees the God Child as being wholly supernatural, while the Child Hero is “human, but raised to the limit of the supernatural” or “semi-divine” (Jung 1955: 166).

Despite separating the Hero and Divine Child, Jung largely regards the Hero Child as indistinguishable from the Hero archetype. Overall, however, this archetype was not as prominently featured in his writings as the Divine Child. In *The Psychology of the Child Archetype*, Jung names several traits of the Hero Child, all of which can be applied to the Hero as well: It is semi-divine, with both human and supernatural traits (indicating the unification of the conscious and unconscious), born miraculously and fated to fight monsters (Jung 1955: 166-167). In *Psychology and Religion*, he calls the Hero greater than man – a sentiment echoed by Joseph Campbell in an interview with Bill Moyers when he said that a Hero is “someone who has found or achieved or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience” (Moyers 1988). While not as prominent in Jung’s writings as the Child, the Hero would become one of the most researched archetypes within archetypal criticism due to its integral role in myths and stories, ranging from ancient texts up until present day narratives.

In *A Writer’s Journey*, Vogler discusses several archetypes that are prominent in literature and highlights the Hero as the archetype that is at the core of most narratives. He sees the Hero as a projection of the Ego that is on the search for its

⁴The male and female traits that the child embodies may, as the child itself, be of a symbolic nature – this antithesis can be symbolic of the synthesis of the conscious (the male) and the unconscious (the female). (Jung 1955: 176)

identity and striving to achieve wholeness. The plot points commonly associated with this archetype are separation from family and battles against enemies, both of which are meant to further the Hero's growth. They are the most active character in the story and carry most of the action, as well as being the character with which the reader should identify (Vogler 2007: 28-31).

Despite the fact that Jung introduced both the Hero and the Child Hero archetype, much of the research into the Hero archetype encompasses child figures, thereby suggesting that there is no difference between these two archetypes and that childhood is not a significant aspect to be considered. Examples from myth – such as Jesus, Krishna or Heracles – are referred to both as Child Heroes and Heroes. The introduction of a specific Hero archetype that is defined by its youth could aid in analysing modern texts in which young heroes are burdened with seemingly unfathomable tasks. It is for this reason that Cain proposed the term Epic Child Hero, an offshoot of the Hero archetype, coined with regards to child heroes as they appear in modern children's and fantasy literature.

Epic Child Heroes are protagonists of epic stories, and they accomplish great feats of strength, courage, or intellect. Unlike the classical archetypal heroes, however, they are not especially gifted in those areas. Instead, their youth is what equips and qualifies them as heroes above any other ability or quality. (Cain 2018: 11)

Much of Cain's description of the archetype corresponds with either the Hero archetype or the Child, but there are nonetheless key traits which help to set it apart from both. What distinguishes these characters as Epic Child Heroes is that they are in some manner physically different from their peers and without parental care, which they compensate with a surrogate family as well as a mentor who guides them. Overcoming its fears leads the Epic Child Hero to victory, and they are willing to accept death for what they hold to be true and right, as well as for their family and friends (Cain 2018: 14). Moreover, they possess an

[...] innate desire to do what they perceive to be right, honorable, and just in the face of overwhelming adversity; each must be inherently good and innocent, for each must be pitted against a violent, overwhelming, and supernatural adult enemy that is beyond his or her ability to overcome, and yet still somehow the child hero must overcome it, preferably by using a virtue such as love which the evil entity cannot understand. (Cain 2018: 14)

While the Hero is coined as flawed and human, struggling to achieve a goal and attaining new knowledge along the way, thereby eliciting the reader's identification,

the Divine Child, powerful, androgynous and thoroughly mysterious, is not a character with whom the reader can identify⁵, as well as being overall a considerably less frequent archetype than the Hero. That there has been significantly less research about the Divine Child as a literary archetype in comparison to the Hero is thereby not at all surprising.

What is notable, however, is that the Divine Child appears to have been given considerable attention in the study of German – and by extension, European – literature, although scholars generally speak of *das fremde Kind*⁶ (the *strange* child, alternatively the *alien* child) rather than *das göttliche Kind*. While treated as a separate archetype, the Strange Child bears a striking resemblance to the Divine Child. Nikolajeva describes this character as “a figure that appears from nowhere, possesses supernatural qualities, affects the lives of other people, and frequently disappears without further explanation” (2010: 188-189). Kümmerling-Meibauer outlines the major traits of the Strange Child based on E.T.A. Hoffmann’s fairy tale *Das fremde Kind* (1817), after which the archetype was named:

Ungewöhnlich ist seine geheimnisvolle Herkunft [...]. Ungewöhnlich ist auch seine Familiensituation [...] und die daraus resultierende Einsamkeit. Das »fremde Kind« verfügt zudem über unerklärliche wunderbare Fähigkeiten [...] Auch durch sein Aussehen hebt es sich von der Umgebung ab [...] Auffallend sind auch die merkwürdigen Alters- und Namensangaben. (2003: 220-221)⁷

The androgyny, abandonment and fantastical powers, in conjunction with the appearance of a young child are all key traits of the Divine Child. It is for this reason that in this paper the Strange Child will not be regarded as an archetype separate from the Divine Child, but rather as a literary representation of the Divine Child, whereby the terms can be used interchangeably.

While both the Child Hero and Divine Child appear as protagonists in children’s literature – albeit with varying frequency – it is evident that there are

⁵ The topic of reader identification is especially frequent in research into children’s literature, although Nikolajeva notes that “[t]he conviction that young readers must adopt the subject position of a literary character is [...] ungrounded and prevents the development of mature reading.” (Nikolajeva 2010: 185)

⁶ The term has been employed in the analysis of child characters beyond this specific time period and beyond German literature – such as Lindgren’s *Pippi Longstocking* and Saint Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* – but consistently with reference to Hoffmann’s fairytale as the namesake of the archetype and its most exemplary instance.

⁷ What is unusual is the child’s mysterious origin. Its family situation [...] as well as the resulting loneliness. The *strange child* also has inexplicable wondrous abilities [...] its appearance also makes it stand out from its surroundings [...] It gives unusual information relating to its age, as well as a peculiar name. (Translated by the author)

clear distinctions to be made between the two. Naranjo observed not only the differences between the kinds of protagonists these two archetypes unfold to be, but additionally how the presence of one or the other is fundamentally tied to the story in its entirety. He calls the Hero the protagonist of *patriarchal* stories. Patriarchal heroes are prone to action, driven by a desire to explore and discover the unknown, to flee from the boredom of everyday life. On the opposite side of the spectrum is the hero of *matriarchal*⁸ stories, who corresponds to the Divine Child. The matriarchal hero is satisfied with the ordinary and mundane, as well as being devoid of a drive to accomplish a particular goal (Naranjo 2002: 30-36). A particularly notable difference between the patriarchal and matriarchal hero is that the Divine Child's inner development is complete at the very beginning, whereas the Hero must undergo changes on his way towards individuation (Naranjo 2002: 47-48).

Naranjo argues that there is an essential difference between the world of the patriarchal and matriarchal hero. Patriarchal stories tell of adventures in unfamiliar worlds filled with magical creatures and riddled with the unknown. Matriarchal stories centre on the real world and the experiences familiar to humans (Naranjo 2002: 24). Moreover, he asserts that the two stories often have greatly different outcomes – in a tale set in a patriarchal world, in which the hero must fight enemies and restore peace, a happy ending follows the reestablishment of peace and harmony. But in matriarchal stories, stories in which the mundane is celebrated and relished in, the plot can only culminate in a bittersweet resolution, which sees the hero either leaving or dying (Naranjo 2002: 46-47).

With the clear differences between the two archetypes established, the following section will focus on the protagonist of Michael Ende's novel *Momo* (1973), who has come to be accepted as a prime example of the Divine Child, although there are reasons to question this verdict.

⁸ As Naranjo states, these two categories are based on the research of Dr. Ravenna Helson into the problem-solving methods of male and female mathematicians. The research led her to distinguish between a patriarchal method – one that is systematic and goal oriented – and a matriarchal method, which shows more openness to intuition and knowledge from the subconscious. Helson wanted to research these two types of creativity in writing, leading to an analysis of 60 children's books written between 1930 and 1968. Naranjo was invited to provide a deeper analysis of the statistical results, which showed two distinct clusters corresponding to the patriarchal and matriarchal writing styles. (Naranjo 2002: 15-17)

4. Momo: A Divine Child on a Hero's Quest

While Ende's *Neverending Story* (1979) is undoubtedly the novel that received the most attention from archetypal criticism, *Momo* (1973) has occasionally been the subject of discussions about archetypal characters, but more so as an example rather than as the singular focus of an in-depth analysis of the archetype the titular character represents. Ewers (2019) and Kümmerling-Meibauer (2003) designate her as *das fremde Kind* and Nikolajeva (2010) calls her the *alien child*. When compared to other examples of this archetype, Nikolajeva states that Momo is "a more mysterious figure" (2010: 189), and that she "is and remains enigmatic" (2010: 189). More recently, Bonin offered a more detailed analysis of this character as a Strange Child, following Kümmerling-Maibauer's list of traits, while also comparing her to other examples of the archetype. Out of the three characters compared, Momo missed the most criteria (2018: 25). Therefore, while Momo is unquestionably evocative of the Divine Child, there is clearly some ambivalence which warrants a re-examination of the character and the inclusion of other possible archetypes.

The following section will offer a reevaluation of Momo as a Divine Child while also considering if she could in fact be a variation of the Hero archetype, or rather, if she takes on the function of this archetype at any point throughout the story. Taking into account Naranjo's idea that fictional worlds can be either predominantly patriarchal and matriarchal, the first facet of the story to be examined more closely will be the world of *Momo*.

4.1. A Mundane Life Thrust into Chaos

The world of Momo appears at times more matriarchal and at other times more patriarchal. That both concepts are present in the novel can be attributed to the fact that the story is a blend of two models of the fantastic according to Mendelsohn's taxonomy⁹: It is both a portal fantasy as well as an intrusive fantasy. The Grey Men and Cassiopeia are fantastical creatures who intrude into the realistic world. The Never Street and the Nowhere House, the home of Master Hora, can only be reached by a portal and are separate from the real world, with only Momo being

⁹ Mendelsohn's taxonomy encompasses four major types of the fantastic: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal. "These categories are determined by the means by which the fantastic enters the narrated world. In the portal-quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape." (Mendelsohn 2008: xiv). It is important to note that Mendelsohn does account for stories in which there is a shift from one model to another, discussing such cases in chapter 5 of *Rhetorics of Fantasy*.

granted access. What this means for the two-fold model proposed by Naranjo is that there is a shift.

The novel opens to what appears to be a matriarchal world, the suburbs of a city with a close-knit community devoid of any major issues aside from the occasional neighborly quarrel. The reader has no reason to doubt that it is a realistic world, similar to the one he or she inhabits. The melancholy of the opening pages only aids in constructing the impression of a world grounded in realism, as the reader discovers that the cityscape has endured changes with technological advancements. Ewers also notes the pessimism that the narrator infuses into the depiction of a technologically advanced society, while simultaneously ascribing a glory to the days long gone (Ewers 2019: 59). That Momo should appear in the amphitheatre, one of the final pillars of the lost golden days left decaying in the grey landscape of modern society, holds great significance and will be discussed shortly.

So while the first part of the book is grounded in realism, not only in terms of the setting, but also in terms of the relationships and experiences of the characters, from the second part on there is a shift. But even as the world shifts to a patriarchal one, it maintains the facade of a matriarchal world. The arrival of the Grey Men and their scheming to steal the time of the townspeople, though in itself a fantastical element, does not unleash the fantastical onto the surface. Instead, the Grey Men and Master Hora stay hidden, and the disruption that changes the people of the suburbs, Momo's surrogate family, appears to simply be a symptom of modern-day life – the preoccupation with work and neglect of any and all activities that, although enjoyable, are deemed unproductive and foregone completely. Nonetheless, there is a stark change in tempo, another aspect that Naranjo considers when differentiating the two worlds. Whereas the first and even the second part of the novel have a moderate tempo, the third and final part evolves into a dynamic and exciting battle against evil, with nothing short of the fate of humanity at stake.

Another shift from the matriarchal to the patriarchal occurs once Momo begins to encounter the fantastical beings, as these encounters no longer reflect experiences from the real world. A striking example is when Master Hora reveals to Momo the secret of how time is created and she observes the life-span of an hour flower. Such and further instances in which the girl is confronted with situations that are completely fantastical and to which the reader can in no way relate to further pull the world of the novel to the side of patriarchal stories. Moreover, the ending is a happy one, one where the evil is banished and peace restored, which is a trademark of the patriarchal story.

When observing the world in which Momo's story unfolds, it can therefore be said that we are dealing with a world in which a change from the matriarchal to the patriarchal and back to the initial mode can be observed. This also entails a shift in the role the central character plays, and thus this inconclusive categorisation lays the ground for the issues in discerning the archetype at the heart of the story.

4.2. Abandoned and Content

“Soweit ich mich erinnern kann,
war ich immer schon da.”
(Ende 2015: 11)

Like all memorable child protagonists that capture the hearts and minds of young readers, Momo has a very distinct physical appearance, which is simultaneously indicative of her uniqueness and strangeness within the confines of the fictional universe whose hero she is fated to become.

The central aspects of Momo's appearance are her thinness and small stature (making her age indiscernible), her unkemptness (a consequence of poverty rather than of distaste for cleanliness), her unruly black curls, and her distinctive and signature outfit comprised of a patchwork skirt and oversized men's jacket. Both Cain and Kümmerling-Meibauer name a distinct physical appearance as a characteristic of the Epic Child Hero and Strange Child respectively, but Momo's perhaps most striking feature is simultaneously a trait inherent to the Divine Child: her androgyny. And yet, there are reasons to question if androgyny is truly a trait of this character.

Upon her initial introduction, Momo's gender is only somewhat discernible. “Es sei ein Kind, ein kleines Mädchen vermutlich. So genau könne man das allerdings nicht sagen, weil es so merkwürdig angezogen war.”¹⁰¹¹ (Ende 2015: 9) The reason for the observer's difficulty in discerning her gender lies in Momo's odd manner of dressing, and the uncertainty regarding her gender is never brought up again once it is established that she is a girl. While this statement about her appearance is no doubt one of the reasons she has previously been referred to as a Strange Child, Momo is not truly androgynous, particularly when compared to the motif's namesake from Hoffmann's story.

¹⁰It was a child — a girl, most likely, though this was hard to say because she wore such funny clothes.

¹¹This and all of the following translations of the German original are taken from the English translation of the novel by J. Maxwell Brownjohn.

Notwithstanding that she is undoubtedly a girl (given the use of female pronouns) Momo's female identity plays a remarkably small – if not even completely negligible – role. Kaminski notes that the novel is in its entirety de-eroticised and that Ende wholly negates both the erotic and the sexual (1985: 81). It is only in games and stories that Momo is ascribed a typically female role, such as that of a princess, but beyond these instances she is in no way bound to her female identity. Rather than exhibiting a unity of both genders, as is characteristic of a Strange or Divine Child, Momo instead appears to be genderless, simply a child rather than a girl. This lack of gender and lack of sexuality is, according to Kaminski, a prerequisite for Momo's pureness, which is in turn essential for her abilities to unfold in the manner in which they do (Kaminski 1992: 95).

What truly cements the impression that we are dealing with a Divine Child are Momo's answers to the many questions posed by the curious people of the suburbs who gather to greet the unusual child. To the question of her place of origin, she makes an indistinct motion that suggests someplace far. To the question of the whereabouts of her parents, the girl simply shrugs. To the question of her birth, Momo says: "Soweit ich mich erinnern kann, war ich immer schon da."¹² (Ende 2015: 11) and continues to claim to be over 100 years old, a claim swiftly dismissed as it is revealed that she has had no formal education and cannot even count. The unusual name Momo stands out against the many other names that are for the most part of Italian origin, and the girl states that she has named herself thus. These details regarding her character are in line with Kümmerling-Meibauer's list of traits that the Divine Child possesses.

This description of Momo's appearance and her circumstances, from her abandonment to her lack of education, not only serves to distinguish her from other characters, but it also appears to set her up as what Frye refers to as a hero of the ironic mode¹³, a hero who is inferior to others in power or intelligence¹⁴.

¹² "As far as I can remember [...] I've always been around."

¹³ Frye distinguishes five modes of narrative based on the hero's scope of power: if the hero is superior to others, a divine being, we are dealing with a myth. If the hero is superior but still human, then the narrative in question is a romance. If the hero is superior to others but still at mercy of the natural environment, he is the hero of the high mimetic mode. If the hero is a simple human with no powers to make him superior to others or the environment, the narrative belongs to the low mimetic mode. The final one is the ironic mode, a narrative in which the hero is inferior in power and/or intelligence. (Frye 1973: 33-34)

¹⁴ Nikolajeva points out that all child protagonists are by default heroes of the ironic mode owing to the fact that, as children, they are inferior to the adults around them (Nikolajeva 2001: 430), but continues to point out that notable child protagonists can in fact be identified as belonging to another mode – with exception of the mythical one.

This simultaneously questions, if not entirely rebuffs the possibility of her being the Hero archetype, despite there being certain other traits that connect her to this archetype. Momo is an orphan with a mysterious past, a fate she shares with many mythological heroes. But unlike in classical tales of heroes, in Momo's case this plot point is completely overlooked, despite the fact that, in particular in fantasy literature, the discovery of the hero's origins can serve as a driving force in the adventure ahead, and even unravel a connection to a benevolent or malicious force. But in Momo's case there is no mystery to be resolved, and the girl does not perceive her situation as a tragic or ill-fated one, nor is it presented in a manner to evoke the reader's pity. A seemingly traumatic past is brushed aside and all but forgotten from the moment the child becomes a part of the community.

Von nun an ging es der kleinen Momo gut, jedenfalls nach ihrer eigenen Meinung. Irgendetwas zu essen hatte sie jetzt immer [...] Sie hatte ein Dach über dem Kopf, sie hatte ein Bett und die konnte sich, wenn es kalt war, ein Feuer machen. Und was das Wichtigste war: Sie hatte viele gute Freunde.¹⁵ (Ende 2015: 15)

Here Momo begins to emerge as a true hero of the matriarchal world, one who is content with the present as it is and has no desire to break away and dive into adventures. This, coupled with her appearance and circumstances, appears to indicate that we are dealing with a Divine Child, but Momo has simultaneously met several criteria of the Epic Child Hero. Beyond the aforementioned physical distinctions from other characters, she is both abandoned and without a parental figure, who she does not seek to find a replacement for. There is no designated foster mother or father, but Momo does find a surrogate family comprised of the many people of the suburbs, thus effectively becoming part of a large and by no means conventional family. Being an ironic hero does not eliminate the possibility of her being an Epic Child Hero, as Cain states that these heroes are inherently ill equipped to face the evil force they are pitted against.

Momo's physical description, coupled with her abandonment, lack of shelter, dependence on others and illiteracy appear to introduce a true hero of the ironic mode, were it not for character traits which elevate her to a hero of the high mimetic mode, one who, although human, is superior to others while still at the mercy of the environment. What elevates Momo to this kind of hero is her ability to listen.

¹⁵ Momo was comfortably off from now on, at least in her own estimation. She always had something to eat [...] She had a roof over her head, she had a bed to sleep in, and she could make herself a fire when it was cold. Most important of all, she had acquired a host of good friends.

4.3. Gifted and Chosen

“Aber darf ich ihnen erzählen,
was die Sterne gesagt haben?”
(Ende 2015: 185)

That the novel opens with the description of the suburb, where most of the plot transpires, instead of the introduction of the titular protagonist, may initially seem to simply delay the appearance of the hero of the story, but this ultimately permits the author to embed Momo into the world in a unique manner while simultaneously leaving hints about the mysterious girl.

Saying that Momo possesses a keen listening ability oversimplifies the matter and deters the attention from what her powers actually mean within the world in which her story is transpiring. The reader is introduced to this world as one in which a golden age has passed, an age when people flocked to amphitheatres to listen and observe the stories that were told and shown there. In stark contrast lies the world of the present, in which only ruins remain as reminders of these times, and it is precisely in these ruins that Momo appears, as though she were a part of that long gone world, rather than the modern one. Not only does she insist on staying in the ruins of the amphitheater, but she appears to possess the same aptitude that the people from the times long gone had, as they were passionate listeners and spectators.

The uniqueness of Momo's powers lies in the seemingly complete passivity they involve on her part. In listening to those who come to her, Momo is able to resolve all of their troubles having not said a word. “Sie konnte so zuhören, dass ratlose oder unentschlossene Leute auf einmal ganz genau wussten, was sie wollten.”¹⁶ (Ende 2015: 17) While listening might seem like a passive activity, the reason why Momo is so apt at it is because she is not at all passive. A prerequisite of her powers is her ability to be completely engrossed and engaged in what people are telling her, empathetic beyond the capabilities of a child her age. Ewers concludes that this is where her true power lies: In offering those around her, regardless of gender or age or economic status, the attention and sympathy that they crave and deserve, Momo is able to guide those around her to rediscovering their uniqueness, dignity, confidence and courage (2019: 66), all things that are lost in an alienated

¹⁶Momo could listen in such a way that worried and indecisive people knew their own minds from one moment to the next.

society. As such, she emerges as the enemy of the Grey Men whose sinister plan is, at its core, the establishing of a completely estranged society.

While Ende is no stranger to ambivalent antagonists, a more common approach in modern children's literature, in *Momo* he opts for a clear distinction between good and evil, with Momo and her allies on one side of the spectrum and the Grey Men on the other. In the fashion of classic children's fantasy literature, the child protagonist must face an adult antagonist. Nikolajeva sees this collision as the symbolic confrontation with the adult world. "[T]he protagonist meets the adult world and proves to be stronger, smarter, and more virtuous than his adversary." (2002: 123) But the conflict between Momo and the Grey Men goes beyond this kind of confrontation, as the Grey Men are not truly human and are symbolic of alienation as a symptom of modern-day society, rather than the adult world. In turn, Momo is not symbolic of childhood or youth or any kind of antithesis to an adult world, but rather of companionship and appreciation of others. The Grey Men stand as a symptom of the modern times, dressed uniformly in business suits and lacking any individuality, while Momo emerges from the ruins of a forgotten time, unique by all means but with no money or status to her, lacking all superficial things valued by society, but nonetheless capable of finding happiness simply by being part of a community.

One final thing that should be noted about Momo's powers is that while Ende may have wanted to highlight an ability we as humans possess but have neglected, there is an undoubtedly fantastical quality to the child's listening abilities. Namely, they enable her to detect something that is completely beyond human comprehension. Staring at the night sky, she is able to discern the sounds of the stars, "Und es war ihr, als höre sie eine leise doch gewaltige Musik, die ihr ganz seltsam zu Herzen ging."¹⁷ (Ende 2015: 24) The ability to hear the voices of the stars appears to be what enabled Master Hora to summon Momo to the Never House in the first place. It also allows Momo to understand the secret of time once Hora shows her the hour flowers. So while the reader may initially opt to dismiss there being any supernatural quality to Momo's abilities, it becomes more and more apparent, as her ties with the overtly supernatural deepen precisely because of these abilities, that there is an inherently fantastical quality to her.

With Momo's abilities carefully laid out, the question that must be posed is how do these help us to determine the archetype that she represents? Fantastical powers are one of the traits that the Divine Child exhibits, but the Hero may also be equipped with a power that sets him apart from other humans. Momo's abilities

¹⁷[S]he seemed to hear soft but majestic music that touched her heart in the strangest way.

hold no forceful powers, no offensive or defensive properties, making her quite the unlikely Hero. Nevertheless, they put her in direct opposition to the forces of evil, and thus despite being an unlikely Hero, she is simultaneously singled out as their biggest threat, inadvertently thrusting her into the Hero's role. Though the Divine Child can hold wondrous powers as well, its role is not to defeat the evil that threatens the world it inhabits. This task befalls the Hero, an archetype integrally linked to confrontations and battles. The Epic Child Hero is also destined to face and overcome forces of evil, despite being inherently ill equipped to do so. This very much rings true in Momo's case, because despite the fact that her powers make her the enemy of Grey Men, they do not aid her in defeating them. But while it is youth that equips the Epic Child Hero to face the threat it is confronted with, in Momo's case this does not apply. She finds herself tangled in the web of the Time Saving Bank because she is beyond their control due to her listening abilities.

The examination of her powers would appear to point most clearly in the direction of the Hero archetype. The final part of this analysis will focus on an integral part of this archetype, and that is the journey that the Hero goes on and how it affects and changes him.

4.4. A Tumultuous Adventure and an Unchanged Hero

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) carefully examines the path which Heroes tread on, be they half-gods from myths or modern-day mortal characters. The stages of the three rites of passage – separation, initiation and return – which together form the hero's journey, symbolically depict the heroes confrontations with obstacles humans are faced with on their own inner journey, thereby essentially symbolising the process of individuation. The Hero emerges changed at the end, matured, stronger, while also having endured losses. But looking at Ende's mysterious child character Momo, it becomes evident that at the end of her ordeal she is exactly as she was at the very beginning.

Momo is what Vogler refers to as an unwilling hero. She is a matriarchal hero, content with life as it is, propelled into a fantastical adventure in order to save her friends. There is nothing that Momo hopes to gain for herself on this journey other than the restoration of life as it was prior to the arrival of the Grey Men. Her biggest obstacle in doing so is fear of the unknown and powerful force, a fear she is able to overcome with the realisation that the ones truly in need are her friends not her. "Als sie so weit gedacht hatte, fühlte sie plötzlich eine seltsame Veränderung in sich. [...] [S]ie fühlte sich nun so mutig und zuversichtlich, als ob keine Macht der

Welt ihr etwas anhaben könnte [...].”¹⁸ (Ende 2015: 248) In realising that she is able to sacrifice herself for her friends, Momo finds the strength to do so. Sacrifice is a crucial part of a Hero’s story, as well as of an Epic Child Hero’s, while the Divine Child is not the one on whose shoulders the fate of their allies rests.

Nevertheless, once the goal is attained, Momo is unchanged. Just as the abandonment she endured prior to the story of the novel is brushed aside and carries no psychological impact, so is the defeat of the evil forces in no manner a turning point for her. Momo’s inner development is static, as though it had already reached a point of no further progression. In this regard, she is less like a Hero and more like a Divine Child, an almost otherworldly being that is not subject to the emotional and psychological developments which are integral to the human experience.

A final matter that should be discussed is the means by which Momo defeats the enemy. The defeat against the Grey Men is made possible only thanks to the help of other fantastical beings, namely the future foreseeing turtle Cassiopeia and the keeper of time Master Hora. They are the ones who equip Momo with the means to defeat the Grey Men, as well as instruct her on what is to be done. This is not to say that Momo deserves no credit for her triumph, as she does eventually face the evil on her own and is left to her own devices to devise an exact plan. However, none of this relates to her abilities; in the moment of truth, she is able to act quickly and cleverly, which, coupled with the aid of her allies, ultimately leads to the downfall of the Time Saving Bank.

Momo does not, as an Epic Child Hero would, defeat evil with the help of her virtues, nor does her youth equip her with a potential that is instrumental in achieving victory. While her abilities do single her out as a threat to the Grey Men, as she is immune to their manipulation, they are of no use in a battle against them. What does equip Momo with the ability to defeat the Grey Men is, for one, overcoming her fear, and being singled out as a champion of Master Hora as well as being given the ability to move through a world in which time has stopped. Overcoming an internal turmoil and defeating an enemy that is overwhelmingly stronger are both motifs ascribed to the Epic Child Hero rather than the Divine Child.

Both Naranjo and Nikolajeva mention that the Divine Child vanishes at the end of the story, leaving as mysteriously as it appeared and remaining an enigma.

¹⁸ Once she reached this conclusion, she felt a mysterious change come over her. [...] she felt courageous and self-confident enough to tackle any power on earth; more precisely, she had ceased to worry about herself.

But Momo does not leave. Having freed her friends from the clutches of the Grey Men, Momo returns to her makeshift home at the amphitheater and appears to impart to her friends a part of the insight into the universe that she attained: "Sie dachte an die Stimmen der Sterne und an die Stunden-Blumen. Und dann begann sie mit klarer Stimme zu singen."¹⁹ (Ende 2015: 299) The reader is left with this image of the strange child, but it is by all means a happy resolution to the story and it appears as though Momo, having fought as hard as she did for this community, will stay a part of it for a long time.

5. Conclusion

True to Vogler's observation that literary archetypes are changeable functions, Momo is a Divine Child who is burdened with becoming an Epic Child Hero; a matriarchal hero caught in the radical shift her world experiences and forced to temporarily become an uncharacteristic patriarchal hero. As such, she reluctantly accepts being the champion of good in the battle against a menacing force only she is able to discern, and she, as is characteristic of the patriarchal hero, succeeds in restoring peace and banishing the evil forces. The fate of being the chosen one befalls her on account of her representing the polar opposite of the Grey Men, inevitably putting her in conflict with them. She is smaller and weaker than her enemy, but nevertheless manages to emerge victorious, albeit not quite in the manner that is characteristic to the Epic Child Hero, as this defeat is not achieved due to the child's virtuousness.

Indeed, Momo is never fully consistent at being the representation of an Epic Child Hero. Her inner stacticity and complete lack of development make her a truly unlikely child figure, and it would seem that the journey she goes on holds no symbolic value for her maturation. At the same time, she is not a true Divine Child either. Much unlike this archetype, she does not disappear upon the story's conclusion. That a Divine Child vanishes or dies in the end is tied to the idea that in this manner they are able to remain a child forever. In Momo's case, there is no anticipation of an eternal childhood. For she wears the clothes she does precisely because she predicts that ahead of her is a very human life:

¹⁹ She thought of the music of the stars and the hour-lilies, and then, in a sweet, pure voice, she began to sing.

Sie trug eine alte, viel zu weite Männerjacke, deren Ärmel an den Handgelenken umgekrepelt waren. Abschneiden wollte Momo sie nicht, weil sie vorsorglich daran dachte, dass sie ja noch wachsen würde.²⁰ (Ende 2015: 10)

What this analysis in no way attempts to argue is that it is a fallacy to consider Momo a Divine, Strange or Alien Child. Her undisclosed origin, demeanor and abilities seemingly come together to forge the representation of the archetype discussed by Jung and elaborated on specifically pertaining to literary characters. Indeed, when observing her traits and appearance, it would seem that Momo is almost fully exemplary of this archetype. Notwithstanding, what the foregoing analysis aimed to underline was the fluidity of archetypes and the necessity of considering the plot in its entirety when identifying and analysing literary archetypes.

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²⁰ She wore a man's jacket, also far too big for her, with the sleeves turned up at the wrist. Momo had decided against cutting them off because she wisely reflected that she was still growing.

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Iva M. Simurdić
Univerzitet u Novom Sadu
Filozofski fakultet

NEOBIČAN JUNAK: PREISPITIVANJE LIKA MOMO IZ ISTOIMENOG ROMANA MIHAELA ENDEA KAO BOŽANSKOG DETETA

Rezime

Predmet ovog istraživanja je roman *Momo* (1973) Mihaela Endea, odnosno glavni lik za kojeg se smatra da je primer arhetipa božanskog deteta. U ovom radu biće razmotreno da li lik devojčice Momo zaista odgovara ovom arhetipu, kao i da li je moguće uočiti odlike najrasprostranjenijeg književnog arhetipa – arhetipa junaka. Iako Momo po svom izgledu i osobinama podseća na druge primere božanskog deteta iz književnosti, nezaobilazna je činjenica da se za njen lik vezuju motivi poput odlaska od kuće i borbe protiv zla, motivi koji odgovaraju arhetipu junaka. Polazeći od stava Kristofera Voglera (Christopher Vogler) da su književni arhetipovi funkcije koje likovi zauzimaju, a ne nepromenljive odrednice, u ovom radu je analizirano kako Momo prelazi iz arhetipa božanskog deteta u arhetip junaka, kao i kako je, uprkos odlikama i božanskog deteta i junaka, nekarakterističan primer za oba arhetipa.

► **Ključne reči:** božansko dete, neobično dete, Momo, arhetip, dečja književnost.