

**A View from Elsewhere:  
The Spatiality of Children's Fantasy Fiction**

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## **Abstract**

Fantasy other worlds are often seen as alternatives with which to critique the 'real' world, or as offering spaces where child protagonists can take advantage of the otherness they encounter in their own process of maturation. However, such readings of fantasy other worlds, rather than celebrating heterogeneity, implicitly see 'other' spaces as 'unreal' and there either to support the real in some way, as being in some way inferior to the real, or in need of salvation by protagonists from the real world. This thesis proposes a reading of such texts that draws on social theories of constructed spatiality in order to examine first how, to varying degrees, and depending upon the attitude of authors towards the figure of the child, such 'fantasy' places can be seen as potentially real "thirdspaces" of performance and agency for protagonists, and thus as neutral spaces of activity rather than confrontation or growth and, second, how such presentations may be seen as reflecting back into the potential for the spatial activity of readers.

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## Introduction

No story, irrespective of type or genre, is ever really placeless. Whilst the time of a story may be unclear or ambiguous (as is the case with those fairy tales that start with “once upon a time”, or with the non-linear texts in what might be termed postmodern fiction), place will always have a specific presence of some kind (even if it is the space of the human mind). In fantasy novels in particular, there is “a very strong sense of landscape” (Manlove, *Fantasy* 1) and, here, I will be examining a very particular type of fantasy narrative landscape: the ‘other worlds’ in fantasy fiction for children. More specifically, this type of fiction presents worlds that are, in theory, “outside the realm of the possible” (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 165), worlds that are different from the represented world of quotidian consensus reality, but which connect to that consensus reality in some way (which includes those instances where the ‘other’ realm erupts into consensus reality). To a large degree, the spatial nature of such fantasy texts remains largely unexplored. It is true that attention has been given to questions of place and space in individual texts.<sup>1</sup> However, it remains the case that children’s literature criticism generally “has not paid enough attention to questions of spatiality [...] and has rarely attempted to theorise the nature of place and space in children’s literature” (Bavidge 323).<sup>2</sup> My aim in this thesis is to redress this general lack.

As Franco Moretti observes, “*each space determines, or at least encourages, its own kind of story,*” such that “*what happens depends a lot on where it happens* (70, original emphasis). Moretti’s observation argues for an importance for space in the novel that is not always matched by the attention given to it. Clearly, writers make conscious choices about situating narratives

within these multiple world contexts, which inevitably places an additional emphasis on their spatial nature beyond their being merely “the theatre, the disinterested stage or setting, of action” (Lefebvre 410), as simply back-drops for the adventures of the child protagonists. This way of thinking about the spatiality of fiction argues for the spatial in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction as being an important textual element in the communication and reception of meaning for, in fantasy fiction, “it is the spatial that determines the realm of textual dynamics” (Armitt, *Theorising* 5). Indeed, in some fantasy novels, “the fantastic worlds generate the action,” whilst in others, “[t]he world *is* the action, and, therefore, the fantasy” (Hume 160, original emphasis). As such, these worlds demand considered attention because, clearly, they have a significant function in the texts.

Understanding fantasy ‘other world’ fiction’s places (as fixed, physical locations) and spaces (as constructed and used sites of activity) is important because, as Jenny Bavidge notes, studying the spatiality of children’s literature can reveal “the discourses by which places are made visible in children’s literature,” and how “narrative logics and representative strategies of children’s literature have their own spatial politics” (323).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the spatial analysis I set out will examine both how, to very varying degrees, the spatial may (or may not) be generated by protagonists, and how protagonists negotiate and use, manipulate and transgress places and spaces, whether that is to offer ways to evade efforts to discipline and regulate them, or as a more subtle expression of control.

Taking Roger Schlobin’s point that “the key to the fantastic is how its universes work, which is sometimes what they are, but is always why and how they are” (para. 16), this thesis examines how and why spatiality is represented,

how it functions and is used in fantasy ‘other world’ novels for children, and how that spatiality operates both for and against child protagonists in differing ways. To undertake this examination, I have avoided categories such as parallel, alternate, mirror, or secondary worlds because often these can be synonymous in practice and function, if not in design. Instead, I will approach this narrative spatiality in terms of the degree to which an entirely separate thirdspace of action and activity is opened up, a type of space that can be actualised (or not) by child protagonists in different ways, including as a performance of play.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the degree of child protagonists’ involvement in the construction of spaces within such fantasy novels can also reveal a number of things. These include the extent to which the texts embed and manifest shifting and various views of adult-child power relationships on a spatial level, what is made available to the protagonists (and, in turn, readers), and how they operate both for or against the child protagonists, and for and against readers (both child and adult). On a simple level, these possibilities can be seen when comparing the spaces of ‘other world’ fantasy fiction to that of fairy tales since ‘fairyland’ is a “space where things happen, not a place of itself” (Hunt, “Introduction” 12). A fairy tale setting is more often than not undefined, but singular, and “fairy tales take place in one magical world, detached from our own both in space and in time,” observes Maria Nikolajeva, placed in an “imaginary world, which does not have any connection with reality, at least not the reader/listener’s reality” (“Fairy Tale” 141, 142). This separateness is not the case with fantasy ‘other worlds’ at all, where some kind of connection, however tenuous is generally present.



This spatial approach will also work very broadly within David Rudd's suggestion that the "problematic of children's literature lies in the gap between the 'constructed' and the 'constructive' child" (30) on the basis that child protagonists can have, as Rudd says, "subject positions available to them" (31), positions that can operate outside traditionally conceived power structures. This analysis of the spatial dynamics in fiction will show, sometimes in contrast to accepted readings, that a spatial approach to children's fantasy fiction reveals much in terms of the degree to which it provides the potential for autonomous action (and the nature of that action), and the opportunity for agency on the part of child protagonists.

The need to attend, as Mavis Reimer and Clare Bradford point out of texts generally, to "*how* texts work, to the discourses circulating within texts and to the ways in which such discourses produce meanings" (215, original emphasis) begs the question of how to discuss this spatial element and how it operates in ways that offer most potential for approaching children's fantasy other world fiction. As Lucie Armitt suggests of fantasy, "while it projects us beyond the horizon on the level of content," at the same time it "harnesses us within clearly defined constraints on the level of narrative structure" (*Fantasy* 7). The first problem, then, is how to approach the spatiality of 'other world' fantasy novels for children through the narrative structure and in more than just a descriptive fashion; what means are available to afford due attention to these narrative representations of spatiality?

Traditionally, narrative theory has argued that a work of fiction need only really be analysed in terms of its plot events and, to a lesser extent, characterisation: "[t]he setting 'sets the character off' in the usual figurative

sense of the expression; it is the place and collection of objects ‘against which’ his actions and passions appropriately emerge” (Chatman 138–9). In effect, the predominant narratological perspective, as Susan Stanford Friedman points out, is that “[w]hat happens to characters in time is the ‘figure’ we pay attention to; where the plot happens in space is the ‘ground’ we can ignore at will” (194).<sup>5</sup> This somewhat dismissive narratological approach to the spatiality of fiction is no less true in children’s literature, where a common perspective is that, “while children’s stories contain descriptions of setting and character, they concentrate on action—on what happens next. Their main focus is always,” says Perry Nodelman, “on the events of the plot” (*Pleasure* 160–1), and the places and spaces where those plot events take place are of minimal concern.

Even Nikolajeva, whilst arguing the case for narratology’s benefits in the study of children’s literature, and despite asserting that narrative theory “is particularly applicable in children’s literature scholarship” (“Beyond” 5), does not consider the spatial at all. As a result, although Mieke Bal does observe that “few concepts deriving from the theory of narrative text are as self-evident” as the spatial (*Narratology* 132), the spatial has often been regarded as a part of description in general and, therefore, as “quite naturally the *ancilla narrationis*, the ever-necessary, ever-submissive, never emancipated slave” (Genette, “Frontiers” 848). Narratological theories, at least in the past, have largely ignored it, seeing it as being a descriptive, rather than a discursive, element of texts, “a fixed element of the text, added to provide emotional coloring or decor, and thus of secondary importance” (Martin 122).<sup>6</sup> This approach to the spatiality of narrative has been the case even though it would seem axiomatic that “spatial reference [is] not an optional or peripheral feature of stories, but rather a core

property that helps *constitute* narrative domains” (Herman, *Story* 296, original emphasis).<sup>7</sup> The spaces of fiction, as constitutive, are surely impossible to overlook.

Recently, there has been something of a narratological re-thinking about the spatiality of fiction, with efforts made to find ways to account for its value within the text.<sup>8</sup> However, the earlier lack of narratological attention to the spatial is understandable in many ways since, at first sight at least, it is the case that “narrative space is clearly less amenable to discursive manipulation than is narrative time” (O’Neill 47). How can the spatial be discussed when, compared to time, its presence in the text defies ways to approach it? Indeed, on the point of a grammar of narrative space, at least one critic has gone so far as to suggest that “literary theory is unprepared to respond to this challenge or invitation,” thereby ignoring “the full potential of spatial language in narrative discourse” (Kort, *Place* 10), a damning indictment indeed, if it is deemed true.

The apparent difficulties should not, however, make understanding the operations of the spatial an altogether impossible task. Certainly, as Edward Soja notes,

[t]he discipline imprinted in a sequentially unfolding narrative predisposes the reader to think historically, making it difficult to see the text as a map, a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together by a spatial rather than a temporal logic. (*Postmodern* 1)

However, an emphasis only on novelistic time denies that people (and literary protagonists) are always “out there” in the world(s), engaging with it spatially in some way. In this regard, Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope, arguing as it does for “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships

that are artistically expressed in literature” (“Forms” 84), would seem to offer a useful analytical tool.

Unfortunately, even despite Bakhtin’s insistence on the “inseparability of space and time” (“Forms” 84), the use of his concept of the chronotope in analyses of children’s literature has done little to come fully to terms with the implications of *topos*; reliance has been largely on *chronos*.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this is not surprising since, as Bakhtin observes, “it has been temporal relationships by and large that have been studied—and these in isolation from the spatial relationships indissolubly tied up with them” (“Forms” 258). Indeed, despite some claims to the contrary, even Bakhtin himself seems to spend most of his efforts discussing the concept of the chronotope in terms of time and temporality rather than the spatial.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean, however, that Bakhtin should be ignored, quite the contrary in fact.

As David Herman notes, “spatialization in narrative is [...] inextricably linked with perspective” (*Story* 301), and Bakhtin, too, has observed that the spatiality of the novel generally operates on different levels of perspective. Thus, Bakhtin differentiates between what the protagonist sees and experiences and the background or spatial setting that is seen by the authors since, as Bakhtin says, “the spatial form of the hero expresses the author’s relationship *to* the hero” (“Author” 96, original emphasis).<sup>11</sup> In terms of the spatiality of the novel, therefore, Bakhtin posits an important difference between a character’s perspective and the environment in which the character is situated. This is a reminder that at least one element of the spatiality of the novel is spatiality with particular respect to the protagonist. The protagonists’ perceived spatial environment, the protagonist’s self-location, depends upon the interrelations

between perceptual experience of, and some form of purposeful interaction with, the perceived environment; that is, there is a context of basic spatial action and experience within the protagonist's perceived world.

Understanding the spatiality of fantasy 'other world' fiction requires, therefore, not just attention to the fixed frame of reference that relates to start and end points (useful though that may be in some respects). It also requires an alternative perspective different from the critical gaze that takes a position from outside the text and, as such, imposes itself on texts, a position that might lead to a neglect of the protagonist's perspective of the spatial environment. What is more pertinent to an understanding of the spaces of 'other worlds' is a perspective that is more properly related to the protagonists and their movement and actions within the different spaces that are presented.

Bakhtin aside, in children's literature criticism, approaches to the spatiality of fantasy 'other world' texts have largely rested on identifying difference rather than seeking to understand the spatial itself. In this separation, 'real' and 'unreal' belong to distinct orders in that there are "two worlds, a real one (*primary*) and a magic one (*secondary*)" (Nikolajeva, *Magic* 13, original emphasis).<sup>12</sup> These "two distinct worlds," says Ann Swinfen, are "inevitably thrown into sharp juxtaposition" (44). On this separation, as China Miéville points out, the general consideration of fantasy is that it "has as its impossible the *never-possible*" (45, original emphasis), which requires an oppositionally posited real for its existence.<sup>13</sup> The irony is, of course, that 'reality' has been historically been set in opposition to fantasy, and yet the 'real' is also depicted as a somewhat unstable state itself and, often enough, one from which escape is sought.

Nevertheless, this reliance on binaries is no accident. The organisation of social thought in patterns of opposites is certainly very common and “is clearly a kind of system that human beings keep inventing and living by, independently of each other” (Maybury-Lewis 1). Unfortunately, however, as Moretti notes, despite the growing complexity of the novel, this binary model “has never been really challenged” (107).<sup>14</sup> Moretti argues, therefore, that “the precondition of narrative is a binary opposition” (107). Given the likelihood that academia does have an “inherited tendency to construct and thereby think in terms of binary and hierarchical categories” (Preston x), then Michel Foucault’s assertion that “our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down” (“Of Other” 23) has a degree of validity. This does not, however, make recourse to binaries an absolute, and nor is the seemingly entrenched position of binary structures an unassailable one.

An understanding of the spatial as a binary (particularly the spatial in children’s fantasy fiction) arises because, however varied the narratives might be, home-away-home is indeed an evident feature, at least on one level of examination, of most children’s novels of this type. The fantasy journey in particular is commonly of this departure and return type, and so “the action often ends where it began (Manlove, *Alice* 197). A protagonist either wants something or someone, or needs to get to a certain place—whether it be an actual location, or some form of metaphorical place—and reaches that point before returning to the place from which the journey began. The pattern’s eminent applicability to children’s literature and the way it is approached is a common thread that weaves

through the criticism of children's fiction, particularly the notion of the importance of the return, specifically the return to home.

This adherence to a formulaic pattern is not surprising given the nature of the protagonists as children, and given the standard view that, ultimately, children are in need of protection and a place of safety; these narratives, then, almost invariably do offer a circular journey that returns home.<sup>15</sup> The 'other worlds' in fantasy fiction do seem to offer a ready-made location wherein the child protagonist(s) can develop or mature in an 'away' space, with the real of consensus reality temporarily left behind but always returned to in the end. This argument broadly suggests that travelling from one world to another mirrors the child protagonists' path from childhood (or adolescence) to adulthood or at least a greater degree of knowledge or experience.

In addition, the home-away-home theme implicitly functions from a standpoint that accepts the notion of place and space as being largely immaterial, as a narrative background with which to highlight the events of the formulaic plot structure in the process of the child's enlightenment in some way. In doing so, it inherently conceives of the interaction between the child protagonist and the places and spaces that the child protagonist encounters as a passive one in that the landscape is simply a given that is neither shaped by nor, less often, shapes, the protagonist. Whilst such a generalisation not only ignores the importance of landscape for protagonists in a number of fantasy texts, in essence it also follows the standard narratological position whereby spatiality is seen as no more than a descriptive element of the text.

Moreover, whilst this general perception of the nature of such fiction applies on one level, the binary is likely to posit home (or consensus reality) as

best inasmuch as binaries tend towards hierarchical oppositions. Its application to readings also operates to bolster the belief that the purpose of children's fantasy fiction is ultimately a conservative one and, for Nikolajeva at least this even applies to cases where the protagonists do not return home. For what she terms the "linear" journey, and its variation, "[t]he so called 'open ending'" (*Children's* 81), Nikolajeva argues that the standard home-away-home pattern is still in operation (*Children's* 80). Perry Nodelman also recently concluded that children's literature "is binary and oppositional in structure and in theme. Its stories tend to have two main settings, each of which represents one of a pair of central opposites" (*Hidden* 243). Thus, the formula of the structural binary seems to operate, in a basic sense, as a set of rules to follow.

The logical conclusion is that the pattern implicitly, but not necessarily correctly, represents the writer as being no more than a vehicle for the archetypes. To some degree at least, this understanding thereby inherently invalidates the conscious decisions, peculiar techniques, and singular vision that the writer might have had in employing such elements towards any particular end, whilst simultaneously wresting any initiative away from the reader and into the hands of the critic. Whether this organisational system stands or falls, it also inherently expects that the reader will inevitably 'see' the pattern and its import, thereby failing to acknowledge whatever schema each individual reader will bring to the reading process (something which I discuss further in chapter four).

Whilst charting the narrative within a binary understanding of departure and return, home and away, may satisfy a certain desire for an ultimate sense of order, in effect, the binary retains a view of the spatial in 'other world' fantasy literature that is, to use Gaston Bachelard's terms, a matter of "[t]he dialectics of



*here and there,*” whereby “these unfortunate adverbs of place are endowed with unsupervised powers of ontological determination” (212, original emphasis). In effect, here, “[t]he inside *needs* the outside in order be inside” (Owen 264, original emphasis) because “conventional deployment of this pattern,” says Richard Gooding, “usually imposes strict boundaries between real and fantasy worlds, thereby containing uncanny effects within the fantasy realm” (393). The binary elements support and protect each other even though ne’er the twain shall meet within a critical paradigm so tightly tied to binary oppositions that the ground is created for the abjection of the other place using the child protagonist as proxy.

The theoretical limitations of adhering to the kind of formulaic approach the pattern indicates can also place limitations on its value as an interpretative tool, for

[w]ithout clear empirical evidence for the existence of the pattern claimed, such models find it hard to escape the charges of being arbitrary, methodologically naïve, poor in actual explanatory power, and insufficiently generalisable to account for more than a modest class of traditional or traditionalist narrative types. (Lowe 10)

This apparent failing to fully and properly account for texts is not necessarily, therefore, able to offer an appropriate tool for analysing varied textual representations, and yet the structuralist approach, as Ross Chambers argues,

has rarely displayed any suspicion of the objective status of its analyses: it believes in a stable and immediately knowable text, directly available to classificatory operations that are themselves natural and innocent of interpretive bias. (18–19)

Ultimately, too, the binary approach does not lend itself to readings of the spaces that comprise the bulk of the narratives, those spaces that are not the beginning and ends points, and nor does it explain the how and why of the spatial itself.

As Sarah Gilead observes, “[d]espite its commonness, indeed its seeming naturalness, the pattern is surprisingly varied in dramatic mode and in meaning” and, consequently, “[t]he simple aesthetics of parallel or circular narrative framing may function for obvious interpretations but falter on closer scrutiny” (277, 278). Useful, therefore, as the structural approach might be in terms of identifying patterns within novels, it says little about either how the texts work or the perspective of the protagonists. It is not, then, the case that this ‘other’ dimension offers up a world that is conceived as a counterpoint to the world in which the normal life is lived, a dissociation from the ordinary world of consensus reality. This view would seem to be far too simplistic, and the difference, here, is between taking either a surface understanding of the spatial, or a deeper one.

The problem of binaries also applies to that which poses an opposition between real and unreal. As Mark Bould argues, fantasy worlds “are not only not true to the extratextual world but, by definition, do not seek or pretend to be” (81). Certainly, fantasy ‘other world’ novels, full of talking animals, ogres, giants and a host of other non-human beings and events as they are, would seem to epitomise the distinction between the unreal and the real as John Morris suggests:

The characteristic features of fantasy—invention, unreality, the unearthly, and the imaginative—show us that a distinction should be drawn between the literature of fantasy and fiction. (77)

This fantasy/realism dichotomy has been identified by John Stephens as “the most important generic distinction in children’s fiction” (*Language* 7). In this binary, realism lays claim to superiority over fantasy, says Stephens, on the basis that “realism typically illuminates life as it is” (*Language* 242). By the middle of

the twentieth century, says Stephens, the desire to “polarize fantasy and realism into rival genres” (*Language* 241), had resolved itself

into an identification of seriousness with realism and a concomitant consigning of fantasy to non-serious or popular literature for those audiences, such as children, deemed incapable of complex aesthetic responses. (*Language* 241–2)

Thus, fantasy literature has regularly been placed in opposition to rationalism and the approaches to knowledge that have predominated in the western world since the Enlightenment, approaches that inevitably work against the establishment of divergent modes of knowledge.

However, the realism/fantasy split is a superficial one in itself. In very basic terms, of course, “[a]ll fiction is fantasy, insofar as narrative scenarios comprise an interiorised image (one having existence only in the author’s head) projected outwards onto a blank page” (Armitt, *Fantasy* 2). All novels provide settings that are ultimately imaginary; they all present a “storyworld,” which is “the world evoked implicitly as well as explicitly by a narrative” (Herman, *Basic* 106). Even so, although Stephens rightly acknowledges that “[a]ll fiction is of course, at least one remove from reality,” he adds that this necessarily implies that “fantasy is presumably at least twice removed, in that it is a representation of something which does not exist in the actual world” (*Language* 242) a separation that pushes fantasy fiction further and firmly away from the real.

Arguing for this distinction also reinforces the possibility that fantasy will be less highly considered as a form since, if the real and unreal of fiction are polarised through the transfer of the character of the ‘real’ lived world to the fictional ‘real’ world, it automatically confers upon the ‘other world’ the status of ‘unreal’: fantasy as opposition. In contrast, for John Timmerman, “the world of fantasy matches our world in reality. It is not a dream world, a never-never land”

(49), and the positioning of an unreal fantasy as a contrast to realism can be problematic. One reason for this problem is that, as Bould observes, the real “extratextual world” is “itself an ideological—and, arguably, therefore a fantastic—construct” (81). As a consequence,

what used to be called empirical reality , or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only “true” or “another equally valid” reality. (Brooke-Rose 4)

Moreover, as Yi-Fu Tuan notes, “although ‘realism’ and ‘fantasy’ have clear and opposite meanings conceptually, their application to real-life situations is often ambiguous and problematical,” and thus, says Tuan, “we would do well to hesitate before placing people or a cultural manifestation in the camp of realism or of fantasy” (“Realism” 435). Things, it seems, are not what they appear to be.

A corollary to this conventional dualism is that fantasy fiction, as Lucie Armitt notes, has “often been considered more frivolous than the mimetic” (*Theorising* 2). Daphne Kutzer also points out that “[f]antasy, more than realistic fiction, is often considered to be escapist in the most negative sense of the word, and hence to be devoid of any serious purpose whatsoever” (79). With regard more specifically to ‘other world’ fiction, Ann Swinfen is critical of what she sees as this type of text’s decided lack of substance, and she suggests that it has

neither the firm underpinning of realism found in the fantasy set entirely in the primary world, nor the combination of imaginative freedom and logical discipline which shapes the creation of the pure secondary world fantasy. (74)

This lack of substance is compounded, it would seem, by the fact that children’s fantasy fiction, as Nikolajeva says, “is sometimes regarded as purely formulaic fiction” (“Fairy Tale” 138); ironically, Nodelman suggests that this understanding impedes analysis and interpretation since “so *few* children’s

novels move much beyond the formulaic or stereotypical” (“Interpretation” 5, original emphasis), at least in a structural sense.

This attribution of simplicity may be a virtue for some for, as Margery Hourihan suggests, one possible reason for the popularity of fantasy novels “is their very predictability; the formula to which they conform is so familiar that they present no challenge to the reader’s interpretive or critical skills” (9). However, appeals to this formula surely only confirm the arguments of those who, as Hunt notes, condemn fantasy literature as “formulaic, childish, and escapist” (“Introduction” 2), and whose aesthetic displeasure with children’s literature arises precisely from the claim that it is indeed a simple pattern for simple texts for simple readers. These critical (in both senses of the word) ideas, as Hume points out, denigrate fantasy literature (and, more specifically here, ‘other world’ fantasy fiction) on the basis that it “does not push us to think” and, therefore, that it “needs no explication and provides no opportunity for sophisticated analysis” (60, 59). In turn, this kind of thinking questions the choice of the aesthetic safe ground by appealing to exactly the kind of approach to the genre that is used by its critics to denigrate it.

If fantasy literature is belittled, children’s fantasy literature must fall somewhere even lower on the scale within a western intellectual tradition that often works to deny, and defend against, the establishment of alternative modes of knowledge. Such thinking also ignores Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s identification of the need “to explore the irrational and integrate it into an expanded reason,” which he saw as “the task of our century” (63) (the twentieth century). It is also a way of thinking that, as Gordon Slethaug points out, has led

to “an inherently dualistic and limited way of defining and perceiving reality, one that has not allowed for aleatoric principles” (190). As Slethaug adds,

[t]his self-enclosed frame of reference cherishes all the philosophical and idealistic concepts of rationalism—cause and effect, coherence, order, and balance—and specifically denigrates or excludes those aspects that are irrational, animal like, orderless, and chaotic. (190)

One might add that irrational, animal-like, orderless and chaotic are terms that could be applied to both the figure and world of the child, as well as to fantasy worlds, for as Rosemary Jackson has noted, “[f]rom a rational, ‘monologic’ world, otherness cannot be known or represented, except as foreign, irrational, ‘mad’, ‘bad’” (Jackson 173); that is, the place of the real is the only location of the rational and objective order.

However, whether this binary mode of understanding can or should still be maintained is open to question. As Louisa Jones comments,

[t]he fantasy-reality duality was one of many conventional nineteenth century oppositions: objective-subjective, adult-child, work-play, matter-spirit, belief in progress-nostalgia for an innocent past, and, particularly, science-art. (238)

Jones’ comment implies that not only is there something anachronistic in maintaining the binary, but also that the terms themselves are in need of re-evaluation. On the question of how one might consider the superiority of the real, for instance, Jacques Ehrmann has argued that

it is legitimate to wonder by what right “reality” may be said to be *first*, existing prior to its components [...] and serving as their standard. How could “reality” serve as a *norm* and thereby guarantee *normality* even before having been tested and evaluated in and through its manifestations? (33, original emphasis)

This contestation of the supremacy of the real applies equally, I believe, to fantasy ‘other world’ texts.

A dualistic response and the notion of distinct separation between the literary realist and fantastic has been argued against. As Hume suggests, rather than opposing binaries, literature can be seen as “the product of two impulses,” whereby “[w]e need not try to claim a work as fantasy any more than we identify a work as a mimesis. Rather, we have many genres and forms, each with a characteristic blend or range of blends of the two impulses” (20). Following Hume, Matthew Grenby also notes the need for a more nuanced understanding of the connection in this case, one that recognises, at the very least, that “the supernatural and the normal exist together in fantasy texts, in various proportions and combinations, but there is no ratio which governs their relationship” (150). Here, Hume and Grenby argue for something akin to Mircea Eliade’s “*coincidentia oppositorum*,” which for him is “the paradox of divine reality” (419) which, for my purposes, has no spiritual resonance but does refer to a “coinciding of opposites,” where “contraries are reconciled (or rather, transcended)” (420, 419), where the two extremes of the binary are seen as mutually reflexive and interdependent.

This fluidity in the nature of what is real or unreal is fundamental to my discussions in subsequent chapters since it leads towards Eliade’s claim that the *coincidentia oppositorum* is also a state where “actual and potential” exist at the same time (419) and, in a literary context, this idea of coinciding creates a position where it should be possible to comprehend the spatial from the perspective of both the material and mental domains simultaneously. This possibility opens up because “fantasy and our conception of what is fantastic depend upon our view of reality,” and thus “the fantastic will therefore necessarily vary with the individual and the age” (Landow 107). This

perspectival approach does, of course, open up the possibility of removing such antithetical categorisations as ‘fantasy’ and ‘realism’ altogether for this lack of fixity of meaning means, as Ehrmann states, that “there is no ‘reality’ (ordinary or extraordinary!) outside of or prior to the manifestations of the culture that expresses it” (33); the real can thus be differently understood.

It would appear that the binary that sets real against real needs to be broken down since, “[w]hen the actual or real is moved out of its exclusive identification with the external world” says Richard Frankel, it is possible to rethink the notion of the real to the point where “fantasy processes, in their capacity to create coherent and organized worlds, can be viewed as bearing qualities of the real” (9).<sup>16</sup> In what Frankel proposes here, it is possible to see a way to approach the nature of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction since, as Paul Fox asserts, “[t]o maintain this discrete separation between the imaginary and the real is to preclude the capacity of the fictive for imagining new, mutually beneficial relationships and identities beyond oppositional binaries” (255); the distinction works to foreclose any understanding of how the spaces of fantasy ‘other’ world novels might open up the possibility for other kinds of spatial practices.

What is required, therefore, is the creative faculty “to see beyond the concrete universe and to envision other ways of living and alternative mindsets” (Pierce 180). This envisioning requires moving beyond binary readings of real and unreal, home and away, and looking for a way to approach how these texts operate spatially as constructed worlds that do not operate as specifically real or unreal, one that removes fantasy from “its role as an illusory opposition to the events of our actual historical reality” (Frankel 9). In this way, when fantasy “is no longer considered merely fictive and imaginary, the antithesis of what is real,



it takes on a life force and coherence of its own” (Frankel 9), and it becomes possible to establish a different mode of thinking about fantasy ‘other world’ literature for children. Thus, if I can appropriate, here, the words of the character Gollum when speaking to Frodo in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1968), “O yes, O yes, there is a third way” (667).

To borrow from Teresa de Lauretis, what is needed is “a new perspective—a view from ‘elsewhere’” (25), and this basis for this new perspective, this third way, lies within the how the notion of spatiality has been re-envisioned in recent times. This new perspective on spatiality works with “another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope substance and meaning” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 11) in order to consider how an alternative locus of spatial activity might provide that view.

Such a view from elsewhere requires not so much an identification of fantasy as a separate, different place; rather, it is that the fantasy ‘other’ world structures and maintains *a* reality. Social theories of spatiality in recent years have tended to move away from the notion of Cartesian certainties to considerations of the world as not simply ‘there’ as a natural and objective phenomena, but as constructed by a range of different social practices. As Alison Waller notes, understanding the spatial as a social construction recognises that

there is no simple distinction between reality ‘out there’ and imagination within; rather, the world we experience is formed by our interactions with it while our subjective selves, in turn, are partially created through those interactions. (304)<sup>17</sup>

There is nothing new in this idea of reality as a construction, of course. As Waller points out, “[t]his is a commonplace of cultural studies, of course, and represents a constructionist stance that has been influential in literary criticism

since the 1960s” (304). What has not been done is to take such ideas and operate with them within the realm of literary studies of fantasy worlds in children’s literature. Doing so affords an opportunity to reconsider the notions of real and unreal as spatial absolutes in these texts and to see their constructedness and their more fluid identities.

This is useful because the spaces in these texts can be more or less divergent from the world of consensus reality, more or less fantastic, and, as with Hume’s understanding of fantasy and reality mixing in varying degrees, the nature of spatiality and the manner in which it operates in various novels can be seen as operating in a variety of ways. However, this variety does not rely upon categories of real and unreal (on the basis that such a binary fails to recognise fully the nature of the space-making that can occur), but is manifested in differing mixtures of the spatially dynamic (as a narrative unfolding of space within the authorship of child protagonists), and the spatially inert (where space is made available at the will of the author, and often, too, where the protagonist has little or no control over access to it). Here, however, the term “spatially inert” does not suggest that there are no spaces to be found in these texts, and nor is it meant to imply in any sense that the narrative is necessarily lessened, for each text will have its own special qualities and considerations over and above the nature of the spatiality it shows.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, there is a need to assess the extent to which authors allow that spatial imaginary to be dwelt in and for agency to be displayed, agency for my purposes here being a “constitutive” action that “implies the idea of ‘causal power’ through which we realize the potential of the world” (Karp 137), a potential that includes the locative.<sup>19</sup>

What is needed, therefore, is a way to assimilate the fantasy *topos*, and an understanding of its implications, within the wider possibility of approaches available with which to study fantasy ‘other world’ novels for children (which, in turn, also suggests the need to re-think notions of spatiality in children’s literature generally). The problem is how to effect such an assimilation without simply withdrawing into descriptions; what words and discourse are available when narratologists have tended to ignore the spatial, and when fantasy has itself been persistently denigrated. Where existing approaches are often based on patterns or ways of knowing that only really give a cursory nod to the spatial in pursuit of other objectives such as the affirmation of a maturation process or the confirmation of the return home as the ultimate goal, it is necessary to differentiate between defined geographies (descriptive) and the spatial imaginaries (discursive) that re-evoke and appropriate, or reterritorialise that geography for a purpose or function other than originally intended.

One way out of this seeming critical straightjacket, therefore, may be quite a disruptive one, as Soja suggests:

Critical theory and Western Marxism have been so muted with regard to spatiality for so long that the inclusion of a theoretically meaningful spatial dimension may not be possible without shattering many well-established interpretive assumptions and approaches, especially those associated with the deeply ingrained primacy of historical versus geographical modes of explanation and critique. (*Postmodern* 44–5)

Soja’s suggestion would seem to be equally applicable to any effort to try to go beyond the ascription of sameness and understand what the spatial imaginary is in children’s fantasy fiction, and how it might actually operate.

Thus, rather than taking an approach that would focus only on a static point (the beginning and end point), and which effectively closes off accounts of

any other spatial processes that might be evident, the focus will shift. As Gilles Deleuze argues, “[i]t is never the beginning or the end that are interesting; the beginning and the end are points. What is interesting is the middle” (*Dialogues* 39). To explore these middles, the focus needs to move away from “the end-weighting of much critical reading by concentrating on middles, both in temporal terms of the middle of a narrative and in the spatial terms of ‘in-between’ locations” (Reimer and Bradford 215).<sup>20</sup> Given this perspective shift, it seems appropriate that some other way of looking at the spatial in fantasy other world novels for children requires an expanded conceptual framework within which to deal with its multifaceted nature.

It is important, however, not to open up the possibility of another binary—that of new/old—in terms of approaches to children’s literature, for this move risks leading to “a paradigm-trashing replacement strategy that reinforces and reifies one component at the expense of the other,” one that “privileges the new over the old, usurps intellectual territory, and severs connections with the past” (Rowntree 582). Instead, as Ricardo Gullón suggests, there is a need

to understand space as part of a whole which gives it meaning. Its relation with time, with the characters, with the narrator, with the readers and their relation to it, are all together more important than a separate consideration of each of these elements. (28)

What is required is that the often neglected spatial aspect of the chronotope be brought into sharper focus because, in Wesley Kort’s opinion,

if we recognize the constitutive role of spatial language in narrative discourse and do that without denigrating the other languages of narrative, we end with a more complex and variable understanding of narrative discourse than is otherwise available. (*Place* 14)<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to work towards a way to incorporate spatial language as Kort suggests, the spatial approach I take here seeks to supplement, rather than

supplant, other approaches in seeking to understand fantasy ‘other world’ texts for children.

Rather than simply discarding traditional ways, therefore, I will follow Soja’s suggestion to look at ways of “opening up and expanding the scope and critical sensibility of [one’s] already established spatial or geographical imaginations” (*Thirdspace* 1). In doing so, I will not be concerned with describing the depiction of the spatial creations that are the ‘other’ worlds found in fantasy fiction for children, worlds such as Oz or Narnia (although not all of the worlds in fantasy fiction for children are actually named and, often enough, detailed descriptions are, in any case, distinctly lacking). I refrain from such descriptive work partly because it has already been attempted, but also because, apart from it being a huge task in itself, simply providing descriptive or classificatory assessments of fantasy worlds would tend to generalise, and it would not seek to understand how the wide variety of places and spaces in fantasy fiction for children might function or operate.<sup>22</sup>

In order to examine the shape of the spatial in texts for children, I have freely borrowed from diverse fields: sociology, philosophy, and geography, archaeology. These theories and ideas are, speaking generally, neither directly related to literature nor to childhood, but rather to adults and real world experiences and issues. They emerged originally as part of a poststructural movement away from grand narrative explanations that encompassed a belief in an absolute space and that material spaces could be truthfully, accurately and objectively represented. In a critical re-evaluation of space and spatiality in social thought that, much as with literary approaches to settings, had previously seen space and place as pre-existing givens playing a a passive role as a setting for

social action, these newer theories of spatiality began to see space as a relational social construction lacking stability and fixedness. This also meant that space was also seen as subject to issues of gender, power and control, issues that are an integral part of discussions about children's literature.

Inherently, of course, there are potential pitfalls in making use of theoretical positions that seem to have no immediate relationship to the subject in hand. Clearly, the theories of place and space I draw upon to develop a literary understanding of textual space-making reference the 'real' world—the actual Cartesian world of consensus reality—and particularly the 'real' world of the adult. Recent spatial theories still largely fail to account for the child (however that term might be conceived) and, more specifically, the literary child protagonist, or even to address children's literature itself. Indeed, even the more “politically correct” theorists and critics still largely ignore children's literature.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, studies of the production of the spatial and how it shapes, and is being shaped by, power relationships, practices, identities, and subjectivities do not always show how spaces are actively used and reconstructed by those who are not necessarily the original makers of these spaces. Children very much fall into the latter category and children as protagonists in literature even more so.

However, although there may be no obvious connection with fantasy worlds in children's fiction, I have located theoretical foundations that can help to explain what is happening spatially in texts, how spatiality is represented and constructed through narratives of different types and at different times. The literary approach I adopt, therefore, takes note of the theoretical perspectives that focus on social space, deny the privilege of time over space, argue for the constructed nature of space in the world of consensus reality—theories which in

themselves look back to the nature of space in past times as well as to the present—in order to shed light on textual productions on the basis that texts themselves are, in their presentations of constructed spaces, effectively no different from constructions of spaces in the quotidian.

Moreover, as Mieke Bal observes, concepts move “between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods, and between geographically dispersed academic communities” (*Travelling* 24), and this is something that needs to happen “if we are to elude the constraints of our immediate intellectual environment” (Said 241). In part, therefore, I have made such borrowings in order to offer a new way to approach children’s literature. However, this is not the only reason for, as Pamela Gilbert has recognised,

[L]iterary studies are interested not only in how literature reflects such understandings of space—how they operate thematically and at the level of plot and setting—but also in how literature shapes the understanding of space, how it intervenes in culture to produce new understandings. (105)

Rather than simply recycle these theories and apply them as they stand, however, I have adapted them where necessary in order to relate them to literary representation in children’s fantasy fiction. The rationale behind this adoption of concepts from outside the field of literary studies is also premised upon the notion that no work of art (including, of course, children’s literature, regardless of any claim to its inferiority) is wholly innocent of its social context whether it mirrors it, reacts against it, or seeks to ignore it entirely.

To develop the notion that spatiality, as Henri Lefebvre suggests, should be seen as being “less and less neutral, more and more active, both as an instrument and as goal, as means and as end” (411), Chapter One sets out to theorise the spatial within fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children. It does this

on the basis that “[f]antasy texts and landscapes are not purely fantastic, or rather neither more nor less so than other texts or landscapes; rather they are located within, and inscribed by, particular social, geographical and cultural discourses” (Balfe 75–6). I therefore draw upon theories of spatiality from other fields of study to see how they might usefully be employed in order to provide an alternative position on the nature of the spatial in this type of fiction. By finding a different way to examine how the spatial operates and is utilised in ‘other’ world fantasy novels for children, interpretative tools will become available to use that have rarely been applied in the study of children’s literature.

To work through these ideas, I start from the premise that something that is generally conceived of as imaginary or unreal can, in fact, be constructed as a ‘real’ space, a literary thirdspace; in effect, reality is only a trusted fantasy. I will then proceed logically from there to examine how, although these texts represent spaces that are ostensibly beyond the possibilities of consensus reality, they do not transgress real-world experiences and actions of space-making. This approach will draw upon and amalgamate various notions of thirdspace as a space that is socially constructed: Lefebvre’s Lived Space, Perceived Space and Conceived Space, Soja’s trialectic of the spatial, the historical and the social (a reworking of Lefebvre); ideas of the nature of space from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; and D. W. Winnicott’s concept of the transitional space and playing.<sup>24</sup> Tying these together will be the work of Michel de Certeau on the everyday, social use of space by taking Certeau’s understanding that “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice” (Certeau 115), whereby a spatial narrative imagination (and, by implication, other narrative forms) offers a way to see



beyond what is immediately visible and to actively create spaces, without which individuals are restricted by and to the quotidian places of the world.

Chapter Two will then make use of the theoretical perspective outlined in Chapter One. In particular, I will investigate the extent to which such fantasy texts can give the impression of opening up the spatial for protagonists, and yet ultimately work to close down the possibility of spatial agency. The texts chosen for discussion cover a broad time period. In particular, I will examine Mrs Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) as an early example of 'other world' fantasy that explicitly eschews the process of space-making in favour of the contained, restrained and regimented world of the adult. I will also examine C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950–1956), together with Philip Pullman's more recent *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995–2000), both of which, although separated in time by nearly half a century (and perhaps seen as worlds apart ideologically), posit the spatial as ultimately controlled by the adult and ultimately unavailable to child protagonists other than for their contribution to the existing space's well-being. Finally, there will also be a discussion of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002) in terms of the nature of home, and the way in which protagonists can often be seen to learn the lesson that home is best, and that the urge to explore other spaces needs to be contained.

Chapter Three will look at texts that, in differing ways, offer fantasy 'other' worlds that are more spatially open, and which show protagonists as active agents in the construction or use of spaces. Again, the texts have been chosen to represent a wide range over time. Thus, the chapter opens with a discussion of Edith Nesbit's *The Magic City* (1910) as an example of a Nesbit text that has a protagonist constructing his own world and thus presenting an

early instance of space-making. The chapter will also discuss Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), and William Mayne's *A Game of Dark* (1971), as additional instances of the construction of thirdspace through the agency of the protagonists. The chapter will also consider *The Homeward Bounders* (1981), by Diana Wynne Jones, as an examples of a protagonist taking control of movement and the spatial even when it is not originally of the protagonist's making. N. E. Bodes *The Slippery Map* (2007) is also examined as an instance of creative space-making that involves not only a child protagonist, but also adults, and considers the implications this has for the ongoing creation of spaces throughout life rather than confining them as only the activities of the child.

Not only are the texts I discuss in Chapters Two and Three representative of a wide range in terms of their date of publication, but they are also quite diverse in terms of the intended reader, from texts aimed at younger child readers to those for older readers (although I have attempted to allow for the age of protagonists as an element of my discussions). In terms of my discussion of these texts, I should note at the outset that, for the most part, my reading of the texts is not historical. This choice of approach is primarily taken because, as Hume points out, “[i]f the non-real is your focus, you have no stable point of reference, and the individuality of each departure from reality, each creation of something new, renders chronology irrelevant” (xii). Whilst this approach may have its drawbacks and detractors, and whilst it may limit readings in certain respects, I follow Hume on this occasion precisely and specifically to tease out the spatial elements of the different texts I consider.<sup>25</sup>

I should also note, here, that the texts I discuss are all by Anglophone writers. This choice is a matter both of personal ease and because the vast majority of writers of this type of fiction are British or from the USA, something which does, in one sense, represent a noticeable bias, and one that is not easy to overcome. In addition, the texts have been chosen not only for their various presentations of the spatiality of other worlds, but also (and quite simply) because I enjoyed reading them, and the pleasure of the text is something all too often forgotten when academia lays claim to a body of work, as has been done with children's literature.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I will broaden the discussion and bring the notions that I outline in terms of literary spatiality back to the 'real' world by looking at how the textual operations of place-making and readings of that place-making experience might open up possibilities for readers (both child and adult), in terms of meaning making, and their own subjectivities and potential for spatial agency. This chapter recognises that "human experience of space is always mediated by human relations with the world, material and discursive" (Gilbert 103). Implicitly, too, it will consider a perennial argument in children's literature studies as to whether children's books are written "for the purpose of socializing their target audience" (Stephens, *Language* 8), or whether these texts should be treated as the vehicles for individual and social change. Regarding these possible role for children's texts, I will consider the possibility that fantasy fiction does not necessarily have to be seen as a process of explaining (although it can, of course, be effectively employed as a didactic tool); rather, it can be an unfolding and revealing that occurs regardless of the author's original intent. The chapter also includes a section on a more visual presentation of the fantasy spatial—the

endpaper maps that often accompany fantasy ‘other world’ literature—in order further to illuminate the reader’s involvement in the active process of spatiality and space-making. It will also consider a non-fantasy textual representation of thirdspace, Katherine Paterson’s *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), which will both illustrate, and act as a meta-commentary on, what I have discussed throughout the thesis.

Without doubt, a fantasy narrative “sets up worlds that genuinely exist *beyond* the horizon, as opposed to those parts of our own world that are located beyond that line of sight but to which we might travel, given sufficient means” (Armitt, *Fantasy* 8, original emphasis). If narrative, as Stephens says, is “a form not only of representing but of constituting reality” (“Narratology” 60), then fantasy worlds are no less real than any other world (be it in fiction, or in the way individuals view and construct their own world-spaces in consensus reality); those “[f]ictional worlds, like reality, are ‘out there’ to be investigated and explored if we choose and to the extent that we are able” (Walton 42), and explore them is what I shall do.

This thesis, then, is a journey within the spaces of the many ‘other’ worlds of fantasy fiction for children. It is both a celebration of the magnificence of imagination that has gone into constructing these marvellous worlds and, at the same time, a somewhat more considered and expansive study of their purpose and function than I believe has hitherto been undertaken. At the very least, this thesis will seek to remedy, in part at least, the complaint that, for a good part of literary critical history, “English literary criticism has been notoriously untheoretical in its approaches to works of fantasy” (Jackson 2), and that it is “either taken seriously (and enthusiastically), or seriously rejected” (Hunt,

“Introduction” 2).<sup>26</sup> These are harsh claims, but not without merit, particularly when it comes to considerations of children’s fantasy fiction.

It may prove to be the case, of course, that an understanding of the spatiality of fantasy ‘other’ world fiction will only provide a means to confirm and complement already held critical views, and this is not in itself a bad thing, for different approaches providing similar results will strengthen existing readings. However, it may also be that taking a spatial approach will add to and enhances those understandings or, more importantly, challenge them and offer new ways to examine these texts, ways that can also give more importance to fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children generally. The exploration starts, therefore, with a consideration of how to approach the spaces of the middle.

## Chapter One: A Third Way

In my introduction, I pointed to the need for a different way to examine the nature of the spatial in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, one that looks both to narrative middles, and seeks to situate the spatial within a framework that works outside of a formal, structural approach. It is all well and good, of course, to suggest such a spatial turn, but such a move is nothing without a way to approach the integration of spatial thinking with an approach to the textual narrative. To do this—and wary of putting forward some form of overarching, all-inclusive theory—I draw on, adopt and adapt different social theories of spatiality in order to approach the spaces in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children and, in particular, their middles.

In this chapter, then, I set out a theoretical framework that first considers Lefebvre’s understanding of spaces as socially constructed in different ways. I then move on to how Soja reworks Lefebvre to produce his own concept of thirdspace as a combination of both the real of the everyday and the imagined. I will then consider how Soja’s concept has connections to ideas of the nature of space from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and the work of Michel de Certeau on the everyday, social use of space and the way people actively experience and make use of existing places to create their own spaces within the world of consensus reality. I will then move on to understandings of an experienced spatial presence, and how the practices of space-making are a part of the everyday experience of individuals. These social theories are then used to develop a theoretical foundation for examining fictional spatiality on the basis that, although the constructed spaces may be fantastic, they must, to a greater or

lesser degree, draw on understandings of the way space is created and used in the world of consensus reality.

This will lead me to consider the nature of ways into and out of spaces in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, taking as a basis the ideas of George Simmel’s metaphor of the door as a connecting force rather than a separating one. The chapter will then move on to eschew ideas of other worlds as liminal locations in favour of D. W. Winnicott’s concept of a transitional third space which, whilst premised upon the psychoanalytical, moves beyond notions of a repressed inner self and considers how both inner and outer human spaces are reconciled in the production of a space of playing as a cultural practice. I then connect this concept to the space-making practices of literary protagonists and incorporate ideas from Certeau on the tactics and strategies of the creation of space as a part of the notion of playing I develop. Utilising these social theories of the spatial will serve two purposes. On the one hand, it will allow me to connect readers’ practices of the everyday with literary and specifically fantasy texts, a theme I develop in Chapter Four. On the other, in this chapter, it will point to an idea of a constructed spatiality that is individual and contextual, and, therefore, will bring a new focus to bear on the texts, one which questions the nature—whether real or unreal—of the literary spaces depicted in fantasy fiction.

### ***Real and/or Unreal***

When Grenby talks of the role of the Pevensie children in C. S. Lewis’ Chronicles of Narnia series as “the reader’s representative in Narnia” in that “[t]hey conduct us through this world, mediating our encounters with the fantastic until we become acclimatised to this weirdness” (151), the first question to ask is what “weirdness” it is that Grenby might be referring to? Speaking

generally, what one person takes for reality, another might consider in a totally contrary way, based on a whole host of factors (including, for example, age, gender and cultural background), and this is something that also merits attention in fictional settings when considered from the perspective of different protagonists. Thus, As Franz Stanzel has suggested of fiction generally, there is a narratorial impulse “to make the fictional world appear as reality” (17), and fantasy writers are clearly no less concerned with this reality-making.

The distinction between real and unreal lies at the heart of the issue of the spatial in fantasy fiction. Western myths and legends—and the narratives that have been derived from them—have long shown us fabulous and fantastic places, from the homes of gods on mountain tops, to mystical places such as the Arthurian Isle of Avalon, with many of these places, at one time, being considered real locations. So, too, in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, where it is often the case that there is a concerted effort—either explicit or implicit—to show that the strange is not strange at all, and that any apparent lack of substance or verisimilitude is counterbalanced by either authorial claims to be presenting the real, or by the responses of protagonists. When it comes to questions of ‘reality’, therefore, common sense is not necessarily a faithful guide.

In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), for example, when Alice is sitting on the river bank, the White Rabbit runs past in Alice’s consensus reality, talking to itself. However, says the narrator,

[t]here was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, ‘Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!’ (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural). (5)



Alice, it seems is nonplussed by such an event. In fact, rather than being hesitant at this sight, Alice is “burning with curiosity” (5), and she follows the rabbit to its hole. Initially, Alice even sees her long fall down the rabbit hole as taking her nowhere strange, believing that she will most probably emerge on the other side of the world, in New Zealand or Australia (6). The reason for this lack of surprise is explained by the narrator in the following way:

For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible. (8)

These “out-of-the-way things” are not detailed in the narrative, but it does indeed seem, here, that the strange and unfamiliar have become almost indistinguishable from the known, and that all things are possible.

John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro have observed of the nature of British fantasy novels that “it seems that a major purpose of the ‘real’ world is to show how much more real the magical world is” (192), and the claim to *a* real (although not necessarily *the* real) is a common thread in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction. J. M. Barrie, for example, is very clear in *Peter Pan* (1911) that there is a difference between the Darling children’s dreaming in the past and what happens to them when they move to Neverland: “Of course the Neverland had been make-believe in those days; but it was real now” (44). Similarly, in Norton Juster’s *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), the narrator explains that, for the protagonist Milo, “What had started as make-believe was now very real” (14). Clearly, however, what Milo experiences is no longer the real of a normative, consensus reality, which suggest that it must be a new, different kind of real.

Such examples of fantasy narratives laying claim to reality are not isolated. The author, Ursula Le Guin, however, is somewhat more circumspect

when she declares that fantasy “isn’t factual, but it is true” (40), which has a certain validity if a fantasy is considered to be “the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into ‘fact’ itself” (Irwin x). Indeed, author Philip Pullman, for instance, goes so far as to claim of the first book in the His Dark Materials series that “*Northern Lights* is not a fantasy. It’s a work of stark realism” (Parsons and Nicholson 131) although this assertion has been challenged.<sup>27</sup> However, if fantasy narratives can be seen as presenting ‘fiction’ as ‘fact’ or, as China Miéville calls the fantastic, “the impossible-but-true” (43), how might this “impossible-but-true” be conceived? To answer this question, I turn now to look at social theories of space.

### *Thirdspace*

At this point, it would be useful to introduce certain ways of conceptualising space that will help to address the question of the impossible-but-true. As I noted in my Introduction, the social theories of space I utilise broadly revolve around the idea of the constructedness of the spaces individuals inhabit. This approach does not deny the existence of a solid Cartesian location or place; rather, it argues for social practices being employed to create different spaces that people can subjectively occupy. Such spaces will be replete with figurative meanings but, at the same time, they still locate the body physically as an actor and subject. In short, such spaces open up the possibility for imagining the real of consensus reality as being different than it is and acting as subject within that differently imagined space.

In Henri Lefebvre’s classification of different social spaces, he puts forward the notion of what he calls “representational” space as a space of imagination (which he also connects to symbolic and artistic practices). More

importantly, however, Lefebvre sees this representational space as being “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’,” and it is the realm, too, of “the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (39, original emphasis). Lefebvre’s position argues for the spatial as the combinatory product of social practice, human perception, and the imagination, and it suggests that the same spaces may be repeatedly reproduced, represented and experienced in different ways by different individuals, an understanding that inherently contests oppositional or binary notions of subjective and objective spatiality and, therefore, between the real and the unreal.

Lefebvre’s understanding of this particular kind of spatiality is, perhaps, more concisely identified in bell hooks’ statement that “[s]paces can be real and imagined” (152) which, importantly, is a process of co-occurrence rather than a choice of either/or. It is, for this reason that understanding the spatial must be something undertaken on “several levels,” according to Darko Suvin, “crucially including the level of imaginary space and its interaction with empirical space” (320), or what might be loosely configured as ‘real’ and the ‘unreal’ space.<sup>28</sup> It is this call for interactive nature of the real and the imagined spaces of existence that Edward Soja also argues for when he notes that the imaginary and the physical are interconnected, but that spatiality, being socially produced, is quite different. This difference exists, for Soja, even though, in the production of social space, physical and mental spaces are both “used and incorporated into the social construction of spatiality” (*Postmodern* 120). Importantly, what Soja sees as emerging from this process of interaction is the production of an entirely different kind of space.

This different space is what Soja refers to as a ‘thirdspace’ of spatial activity, a space that is not wholly imaginary as a contrast (or even an equivalent) to consensus reality, but one that is not entirely bound to that reality either. Thirdspace is, says Soja a spatial consciousness that is “an investigation into a multiplicity of ‘real-and-imagined places’” (*Thirdspace* 6). By reworking Lefebvre’s theory of spatial production, what Soja envisions, here, is a space that is “a creative recombination and extension” of both the “‘real’ material world” and the “‘imagined’ representations of spatiality” (*Thirdspace* 6).<sup>29</sup> It is a space that belongs, at the same time, to both, or neither, categories of the real or unreal, the mental and the physical, but it is a space where, says Soja, the actions of an individual in respect of the spatial are “both space-forming and space-contingent” (*Postmodern* 81); individuals, even children, both operate on and are operated on by this new space.

Space-forming, here, relates to what Cornelius Castoriadis terms, “the radical imagination,” where imagination has the sense of invention or creation. This kind of imagination is not, says Castoriadis, the “secondary” imagination which is “imitative, reproductive, or combinatory,” (319) because the radical imagination is “*before* the distinction between ‘real’ and ‘fictitious’” (321, original emphasis). In this process, Castoriadis stresses “the creative function of the imagination in the cognitive [...] domain” (327). This cognitive process works because, as Jerome Bruner suggests, “[w]e know the world in different ways, from different stances and each of the ways in which we know it produces different structures or representations, or indeed, ‘realities.’” (109).<sup>30</sup> Doreen Massey, too, notes that “the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it,” and

the identities of place, rather than being “bounded, as in various ways a site of an authenticity, as singular, fixed and unproblematic in its identity,” are always “unfixed, contested and multiple” (3, 5). This understanding of spatiality argues that place should always be considered in the plural.

A more concrete example of how this plurality works is to consider the case of blind people, who are able “to recognize a traveled route and to represent spatial information” (Kupers et al 12716). Unable physically to see the places in the physical world around them, they construct individual spatial representations of the spaces based on their own passages through the places, often from the spatial practice of repetition of the routes they need to follow. As well as auditory, tactile, and other cues, the blind use “allothetic signals” and these are “fixed to the environment itself or to individual objects. These require that the subject encodes the relationships between environmental landmarks, motion, and goal location,” and where “the location of objects within allocentric frameworks does not change when the subject moves in the environment (Kupers et al 12719). It seems logical that these routes that blind people map out for themselves are not wholly dictated directly by the path set out for sighted people, but are their own trajectories, and each blind person will have his or her own spatial understanding of the same place; in effect, through the practice of changing place into space, a thirdspace of their own construction is achieved.

In this respect, Siegfried Schmidt’s observation that “we construe our world by and through living it,” and that “this world is a world of experience, not an ontologically ‘real world’” (92) seems to take on greater relevance for what literary protagonists are shown as experiencing (as I shall discuss later in this chapter), for “however the human mind imagines the world, that is how the

world tends to become” (Meeker 27), and this propensity can also pertain to the depiction of the activities of literary protagonists.

However, making use of the space in this way is not necessarily about subverting the real; “[f]antasy re-combines and inverts the real, but it does not escape it” (Jackson 20), and this escaping without leaving is a movement that is a kind of narrative nomadism since it is not referenced by markers of here and there, nor by recourse to a particular, fixed path. Thus, the spatial can be seen as an interpretative practice generated by means of a human facility that situates individuals in a personally authentic space, a thirdspace, one that emphasises the particular and contingent perspective of the viewer (or, in the case of a literary text, the protagonist).

The spaces, therefore, are not topologically real in a Cartesian sense, nor do they seek to portray actual places in the world of consensus reality; rather “it does not seem that the real and the imaginary form a pertinent distinction,” and they are, therefore, “like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory” (Deleuze, *Essays* 62, 63). In that these spaces are conceived of, constructed, and shaped by individuals in the course of their motions and activities and, in turn, they have an actual effect in terms of shaping the ways individuals understand and act upon and within the space that has been created, for “[t]he trajectory merges not only with the subjectivity of those who travel through a milieu, but also with the subjectivity of the milieu itself, insofar as it is reflected in those who travel through it” (Deleuze, *Essays* 61). As a result, the existence of these spaces has a purposeful reality, and thus a consequential substance based upon the individual’s actual being there, in the space, and moving within it.

### *Spatial Practice and Spatial Presence*

Different spatial realities can be conceived, constructed and experienced as real by individuals as an active and subjective act of shaping (and, in turn, being shaped by) movement, and by how people act upon and within the space that has been created. This interaction means that “the creation of space is itself a matter of practices, and practices that take place in places” (Curry 102); spatial practices actualise the space, and thus the nature of this thirdspace is, then, “*practiced place*” (Certeau, original emphasis, 117). The idea of spatial practice, here, refers quite simply to the way that space is made use of by individuals (or protagonists in the case of the literary). In social life, the practice of the spatial recognises the importance of both the built environment and the representations that are constructed from the perception of that environment; it is the product of conceptions about and utilisations of, the place in which individuals operate, and it is from the activities of actors within that space that the spatial as thirdspace emerges from both the built and the created.

In line with my earlier distinction between place and space, Certeau sees places existing only in the abstract, as unrealised sites for narrative action, as locations that have not yet been utilised, and which only become meaningful when acted upon by ‘narrative’ agents. Spaces, on the other hand, are places that have been acted upon (practised) and which are, therefore, the location of narrative events.<sup>31</sup> As such, the spaces come into existence as a result of a creative act of movement, a creative act of world-making, on the part of individuals in the world and, in the case of children’s fiction, as depicted through the actions and movements of the child protagonists. This concept is not such an unusual one, however, for, as Gullón points out of life, “[e]very day we

experience the dual or triple space which we occupy and in which we function. Distinct personae live simultaneously in different worlds” (19). This existence, however, is not one based on the illusory, but on an imaginative capacity to locate oneself in multiple locations; although sitting in an office, one can create the space of the house at dinner time and the supermarket where the ingredients for the evening meal will be bought. Indeed, as Michael Curry suggests,

it is not just possible, but inevitable that at a given moment we are in more than one place. One might go so far as to say that humans are the animals, and the only animals, that can be in two places at once. (103)

Why should literary characters not be shown as possessing such a recognisable human capacity within the limits of the text?

Given the capacity for fictional characters to operate experientially within multiple spaces, therefore, thirdspace in this literary context can also be seen as a contingent, unfixed, created and experienced space. It is a dynamic, contiguous and, very importantly, lived and experienced space, one that exists as part of a multiplicity of (sometimes unactualised) virtual spaces. For protagonists, the environment of the thirdspace is not, therefore, a replication of the real, nor is it in itself a recognisably physical, objective phenomenon. It is akin to what Fox terms a “fictive” space, one that moves beyond oppositional binaries “of the real and the fictional, the true and the false, and also the synonymous relationship between the fictional and the imaginary,” and refers, says Fox to “the relational, creative, and ludic ground between the real and the imaginary” (267). Although this argues a space between, a liminal location, which is something I discuss later, what is important, here, is, as Fox says, that “[t]he function of the fictive is to *undetermine* the real, to afford a space wherein the imagination can operate upon it” (256).<sup>32</sup> It is, therefore, an authentic, constructed space in which to act,



and the agency that creates that space, and therefore the ownership of that space, can be seen in terms of there being a “sense of place” that is “a knowing that is the result of conscious effort” (Tuan, “Rootedness” 8), in this instance, on the part of the literary protagonist.

Thomas Schubert refers to such a sense of place as “*spatial presence*” and he notes that, regardless of the form of mediation, “the *sense of being there*” that can arise “in virtual environments, mediated real (remote) environments, or real environments” (163, original emphasis). Schubert argues that spatial presence “is a feedback of unconscious processes of spatial perception that try to locate the human body in relation to its environment, and to determine possible interactions with it.” (170). Once this feedback is processed, it takes on the form of an actual and real understanding of the whereness of the individual. As a result, says Schubert, “[i]f the spatial cognition processes are successfully able to locate the body in relation to the perceived environment, and construct possible actions in it, the feeling of spatial presence is fed back and becomes available for conscious processes.” (170), which ultimately recognises the lived experience of the space as a lived experience.<sup>33</sup>

With this understanding, space seen as “practiced place” requires an emphasis on how the individual both understands and utilises the surroundings from an experiential perspective, how the individual’s perception, experience, and practice turns the physical space into an individual space. This actualisation results from the movement of the protagonist within the thirdspace, a movement that can be seen to operate in much the same way that Certeau considers individuals in New York walk through the places of the city as “the ordinary practitioners of the city,” but who “make use of spaces that cannot be seen” (93),

and whose walking reveals newly-made spaces by traversing paths of their own making rather than simply following the routes officially prescribed and marked out for them.

Another way to look at this spatialisation is in terms offered by Deleuze and Guattari, who suggest the difference between “a *smooth* (vectorial, projective, or topological) space and a *striated* (metric) space” (*Plateaus* 399, original emphasis). This description of spaces does not posit them as oppositional, however, because they “exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (*Plateaus* 524). Here, smooth space is the movement that Certeau suggests as breaking up the formal pattern of the city, and which Deleuze and Guattari equate with nomad space. Striated space is sedentary and equates to the fixed, the ordered, and the controlled, the fixed plan of the city, because striated space is “limited and limiting” and because it is “the geometry of the immovable” (*Plateaus* 442, 430). Smooth space, in contrast, “is directional rather than dimensional or metric,” and this smooth, nomad space is “localized and not delimited” (*Plateaus* 528, 442) and thus allows for a freedom of movement.

Certainly, the physical organisation of a place will make certain choices of movement unavoidable (or will at least seek to do so) but, in Certeau’s understanding of such movements,

[t]he long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be; it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. (101)

Curry's view is that "it would make more sense to compare a place to a conversation" (101), and Certeau, too, writes of the city walkers' movements as "pedestrian speech acts" that can re-make the space in new and different ways, and where such walkers can become "poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths in the jungle of functionalist rationality" (xviii) and thus creators of their own spaces.

In Certeau's reading of the way the spatial can be interpreted by individuals walkers in their everyday lives, people can make use of what are, in effect, the unseen places of their environments and, in so doing, alter "the clear text of the planned and readable city" (93). As Certeau argues,

if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities [...], then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. (98)

Ordinary people thus create and construct their own movements within and through places that are not necessarily constructed by them, and "their trajectories form unseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space," trajectories that "trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop" (xviii).

Certeau does note that individuals' movements within the city can be traced subsequently but, as he says, "[t]he trace left behind is substituted for the practice" (97); that is, such tracing is actually an act of forgetting the original and real practice that it seeks to mark out. However, as Fran Tonkiss puts it,

[i]f the official order of the city is written down as so many rules, codes, maps and plans, the individual's version is a spatial story told as if out loud in the streets of the city, leaving no trace other than a movement in the air. (115)

These spatial stories are instances of individual space-making, and Certeau's discussion of what are everyday practices involve the transformation of place into space is, therefore, closely linked to Soja's Thirdspace since "space arises from purposeful social practice" (Soja, *Postmodern* 80), and thirdspace corresponds to lived space, the space in which people experience their existence.

### *Literary Thirdspace*

The next avenue to explore is how these understandings of social space might relate to the fictional texts of fantasy 'other world' novels for, "[i]n fiction, the reality creating potential of language comes to the fore particularly clearly" (Knowles and Malmkjær xi). Certeau has outlined a particular connection between the spatial and narrative forms in his understanding of narrative as a product of spatial interactions, a "complex network of differentiation" and "a combinative system of spaces" (126). Seeing narratives in this way, as "treatments of space," where narratives open a "legitimate theater of practical actions" (Certeau 122, 125), reveals the process by which characters act upon, and gain control over narrative spaces. Certeau argues that stories "traverse and organise places; they select and link them together, they make sentences and itineraries out of them" (115); what we see in these (and other) novels are what Certeau would term "fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces" (128). Such utilisations of place are, says Certeau, "contradictory movements that offset each other and interact outside the purview of the panoptic power" (128), and these appropriations of space point to spatial relations as a central organising principle of all narratives.

For Certeau, narrative "is made of movements: it is topological, concerning the deformations of figures, rather than topical, defining places"

(130). A protagonist in a narrative such as a fantasy ‘other world’ text can therefore be seen to travel across a space that is produced in the space of narration and, once the notion of a ‘barrier’ between spaces has been dissolved, this thirdspace has no set limits. It is not, then, a question of “roots,” being fixed in a single location, one that relates to home and the real, but rather one of “routes,” movements which establish the spatial as fluid.<sup>34</sup> If protagonists are enabled by writers to grasp this opportunity to “author” the world through movement, they will to a greater or lesser degree shape and reshape the space.

Thirdspace, then, as an indeterminate space—neither absolutely this, nor that—should more specifically be understood as being not a state in between binaries, not as a marginal location (other than by seeing that, in effect, every space is marginal), but as a created space that can no longer be referenced by the concepts of real and unreal, or by such locative terms as here and there, for ‘here’ is always a shifting space (as is ‘there’). It is a space that incorporates a/the ‘other’ or the ‘not here’ into the current (rather than consensus) reality situation as if it were already part of it, and does so as part of a constructive process of movement on the part of the individual.

This situation is no less the case when it comes to fantasy for, as Judith Butler comments, fantasy is the “the articulation of the possible,” and “it moves us beyond what is merely actual and present into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualisable” (29). To develop Butler’s point, however, what actually needs to be considered is not the possible as it relates to the real, but the virtual as it relates to the actual. This is because, as Deleuze states, “it is the possible that resembles the real, because it has been abstracted from the real once made,” and thus the possible “only gives a real that is ready-made,

performed, pre-existent to itself, and that will pass into existence according to an order of successive limitations” (*Bergsonism* 98). Deleuze argues, instead, that it is the virtual that awaits actualisation and, “in order to be actualised, the virtual cannot proceed by elimination or limitation, but must *create* its own lines of actualisation in positive acts” (*Bergsonism* 97, original emphasis). The constructive act is, therefore, a vital element in the process.

Actualisation, as Deleuze suggests, “is always a genuine creation. It does not result from any limitation of a pre-existing possibility” and the process of actualisation creates “divergent lines which correspond to—without resembling—a virtual multiplicity” (*Difference* 212). In many ways, there is no great difference between this understanding of thirdspace as an actualised spatial and Jackson’s suggestion that fantasies open up another realm of existence since, for her, “the fantastic exists in the hinterland between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’, shifting the relations between them through its indeterminacy” (35). Whilst Jackson’s suggestion nods once again to the notion of binaries, it does give a closer understanding of what might be happening in fantasy spaces than would an absolutist separation of the two domains.

Jackson’s understanding of the way the spatial emerges also works towards Hume’s understanding of a shifting mix between fantasy and the real but, more importantly, Jackson does also suggest the existence of a “paraxial area,” another realm of existence, which represents for Jackson “the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely ‘real’ (object), nor entirely ‘unreal’ (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two” (19). Although Jackson’s very specific notion of fantasy does not consider children’s literary fantasy as of value, and Hume also chooses to focus

on adult fantasy fiction, what they both suggest is that a consideration of fantasy fiction—including, therefore, fantasy fiction for children—is no longer a simple matter of real versus unreal. This consideration, in turn, suggests that Manlove is right to assert that it is mistaken thinking to “maintain that the other world exists only as a symbolic commentary on this one” (*Alice* 213 n1) in fantasy fiction for children.

Although Jackson’s sense of the spatial in fantasy still largely retains the notion of binaries as a basis for the “paraxial,” she does take this idea further when she argues more specifically that “[f]antasy is not to do with inventing another non-human world;” instead, she says, it concerns “inverting elements of this world, recombining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and *apparently* ‘new’, absolutely ‘other’ and different (8, original emphasis). Thus, with this added understanding, fantasy operates to “explode or transgress the frame of the ‘real’ and thus opens up a space of uncertainty” (Shires 267) which, in turn, argues again for the spatial as “an unstable terrain” (Oakes 525), one that does not necessarily have the fixedness that it might seem to have.

In much the same way that Soja sees space as being “simultaneously real-and-imagined and more” (*Thirdspace* 11), Jackson’s understanding of fantasy spaces as a new and altogether different space allows for a consideration of the spaces of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, in terms of the degree to which they operate as ‘real-and-imagined’ places, as newly formed, and in the degree to which they present a spatial openness that is constructed by protagonists as, to borrow Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s words, “a new part fabricated separately” (*Anti-Oedipus* 44).

When considered in terms of its application to the analysis of fiction, this also argues for other worlds that have substance not as separated realms of otherness, but rather as locations where the spatial operates as a multiplicity of *heres* and *theres*, an interconnected array of potentially available spatial locations all awaiting actualisation through the agency of protagonists and their movements into and within those spaces. This argument assumes, of course, that it is enabled since, at the same time, non-actualisation ought not to be taken to signify non-existence, for aspects of the virtual may remain unactualised as elements of the not yet narrated.

Although this notion of the spatial might seem to be what happens in modern video games, with players seemingly having some degree of control over environments that can be explored at will, players can actually only interact with spaces in ways already envisaged and coded by the game's designers: "[s]pecifically, commercial games try to make it as hard as possible for players to figure out why something happened (i.e., to enable the player to fully understand the game's underlying Imaginary World) so that they will play a long time and feel that they got their money's worth in entertainment value" (Black 204). In truth, there is more of a connection with fantasy role playing games.<sup>35</sup>

This idea of spaces being, in some way, created by protagonists could be what Grenby is suggesting when he comments that, "in books like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we get the impression that the fantasy world lacks an independent existence, that it has only been created for the benefit of the central characters" (159).<sup>36</sup> However, there is, in fact, an important distinction to be made, here, since worlds being created *for* characters are unlikely to operate in the same way as those spaces whose existence cannot be separated from the



characters who, within the context of the narrative, are seen to effectively create them. Conversely, texts that tend towards the less spatially open for protagonists will not present actualisations. Rather, they will be likely to offer concretised spaces that are either fantastic representations of empirical space, or that can be truly considered as alternative ‘other’ places that exist only to show protagonists that the home or consensus reality is the best place to be, and I will look at examples of such texts in the next chapter. In sum, not all novels will present the spatial as a thirdspace, and even those that do will represent this thirdspace in different ways.

A true literary thirdspace is neither real nor fantasy, but an entirely separate, thirdspace of action and activity, a constructed narrative of self-in-place that has no immediate reference other than to itself within a process driven by plausibility for the protagonist(s) rather than by any measure of externally imposed accuracy. In this respect, therefore, fantasy *other* world fiction can be seen as something of a misnomer because these novels are not presenting a “geography of the non-existent” but rather, to varying degrees, an “anti-geography of the existent” (Appelbaum 12.1). Robert Appelbaum is actually referring to early modern cartography, “a system of imaginary geography, a geography beyond geography, as it were—a system of fantasy with roots in classical antiquity” (1), but this description also opens up the possibility of seeing textual ‘other worlds’ as an imaginary geography of places and spaces outside the ‘known’ universe (that is, the singular ‘real’ of consensus reality), but which fill that space as though it were similar to or continuous with the known. By removing the dualism that distinguishes between real and unreal, it becomes possible to see that ‘other worlds’ are not necessarily ‘other’ at all.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the spatiality of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction should not be viewed in terms of such binary references as centre and margin, real and unreal, self and other. Instead, it should be seen in terms of the degree to which a thirdspace can be actualised, where the ‘fantasy’ process becomes not one of dissolving or opposing a putative and given ‘real’, but rather an instance of fixing *a* real. It is a real that is appropriate to the moment as a product of the protagonist’s creativity and experiences, rather than being simply the unreal product of the protagonist’s “dreams, visions, hallucinations, or imaginings” (Nikolajeva “Fairy” 153), and it is a real that can be lived in and through.

This suggestion regarding the real of protagonists’ experience does not overlook what Nikolajeva has called a “profound problem” regarding the ontology of characters in fiction in terms of the “strong tendency to treat and judge characters in children’s books as if they were real,” which raises, she says, the following question: “are we to treat them as real people, with psychologically credible traits, or merely as textual constructions?” (“Beyond” 9, 8). What is at stake, however, is the extent to which literary characters are seen to be in control of the real and imagined spaces they move within (which points to the approach of the author towards the nature of childhood as controlled or open) and the degree to which this represents possibilities for spatial agency on the part of readers either by recognition of the way protagonists are given opportunities to create spaces, or by readers understanding that spaces might be actualised regardless of how authors position protagonists or intend to direct readers (a point I will return to in Chapter Four).

Considering this potential difficulty, and to explain more clearly how this space-making might operate, Gullón’s reference to James Thurber’s literary

creation, Walter Mitty, provides a ready example. As Gullón points out of Mitty, he

is physically in his city and engaged in its daily insignificance, but at the same time his mind soars through the clouds of fantasy and there *he is* whatever he wishes to be. It is not necessary to decide exactly where he truly is at any given moment: both spaces are part of his life, locales of his existence. (19, original emphasis)<sup>38</sup>

I am not trying to suggest, here, that child protagonists in fantasy other world fiction should be viewed as Walter Mitty types, for the traditional view of Mitty is as the archetypal fantasist, whiling away his time daydreaming rather than attending to his real world; that is, he is purely an escapist. Moreover, this move is not an attempt to re-establish the child (or, in Mitty's case, perhaps, the childlike) as the repository of an imaginative process that harks back to a Romantic notion of the fanciful child. Viewed in terms of the spatial, Mitty's space-making is not simply capricious or whimsical, the stuff of fanciful imagining or daydreaming (for that would be a misunderstanding of the imagination as something less than solid and powerful, when clearly Mitty actualises spaces and then acts within them). Instead, what Mitty's spatial practices show is that the individual worlds he experiences and operates in are available and exist as a part of his—that is the protagonist's—realm of actual, lived experience.

What Mitty's experience suggests is that, rather than taking the basic premise of fantasy as only being “a literature of *possibilities* [that] opens the door to the realm of ‘What If’” (Pierce, 180, original emphasis), it should more concretely be seen as a projection which, once actualised, becomes a moment of ‘as if’ because “[t]o be in fantasy is to live ‘as if’” (Riley 13). In an “as if” understanding of the real, “the object of the world of ideas as a whole is not the

portrayal of reality [...] but rather to provide us with an instrument for finding our way about more easily in the world” (Vaihinger 15). To survive, people construct systems of thought, based on needs and then act “as if” the real were what the fictions claim it to be. In effect, as William James summarises this notion of lived realities, “[i]deas (which themselves are but part of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience” (30). Such constructed understandings function to enable lived lives to be led.

Living “as if” is not, therefore, a simply a matter of daydreaming or reverie, or even escapism. As Fox states, “[i]t is important that an *as if* method of reconceiving reality is understood not to be an indulgence in pretence but rather the practice of actualizing fictions that consequently and incontrovertibly alter reality itself” (260).<sup>39</sup> Such an approach, then, constantly recreates present contexts rather than projecting future unknowns and, in so doing, the primary purpose of the process is not to portray or mirror reality, for “[w]e are absolutely unable to compare ‘reality as such’ with the products of our cognitions” (Schmidt 92), but to create a realm of real.

In effect, this realm is very much a reality for the protagonists who are enabled as makers of that space and this can be envisaged because, as Nikolajeva has pointed out, “following the development of natural science, fantasy literature tends to view parallel worlds as equally real, so that nothing is, positivistically, acknowledged as the utmost reality” (“Fairy Tale” 154). If it is possible to conceive, as does Gullón, that “the invented space exists starting from the moment of invention itself,” and that “[i]nvention confers substance, and substance reality” (12), then this moment of invention can apply equally well to

the moment of creation of the thirdspace within the text world, a moment that can be understood as a matter of creating only a contingent real; there is no unreal to be considered by the protagonists since any 'unreal' is seen only from the outside looking in.

It is from this outside-in critical perspective that Grenby refers to the protagonists "willingness to suspend disbelief" (151), but the notion of a literary thirdspace militates against the idea that fantasy is a willing suspension of disbelief, of characters knowing full well that the site of their activities is a fantasy but acting as if they do not know this to be so.<sup>40</sup> This is because, rather than thirdspace being an illusory mental projection, it operates as a deliberately conceived of, lived, practiced and experienced space of activity; it emerges from a cognitive process of construction rather than a flight of fancy.

In terms of this cognitive aspect of the construction of spaces, Ruth Byrne has noted how the process that underlies the imagination of alternatives to reality "shares the same principles as rational thought" (209), suggesting that imagination—and therefore fantasy creation—is itself rational. Byrne also points to how "the principles that underlie rational thought guide the sorts of possibilities that people think about," and that "[p]eople think about possibilities and the sorts of possibilities they think about are true possibilities" (208, 214). Byrne is discussing, here, the creation of counterfactual alternatives to reality, which is an essential element in the construction of a space that can be lived and experienced and, most relevant, is the way that individuals rationally construct "truths" in the process of creating alternatives to reality; they are, in effect, imagined but real for the purpose they serve.

Writing in 1946 of the post war trend for fantasy, Edward Wagenknecht was clear that “[t]he countries of the mind are real countries, legitimate to build, legitimate to inhabit” (437). Such worlds should not be seen, however, simply as whimsical musings on sites that are insubstantial and unable to be experienced, nor should they only be considered as creations of the author for, by and large, those that emerge as a thirdspace exist for and by the activity of the child protagonists. Thus, “fantasy becomes imagination, an actual region or place of awareness possessing substantiality, embodiment and some degree of autonomy” (Frankel 9). If this type of fiction is seen not as simply imitating reality, or holding a lamp up to it for the purposes of critique, but as actually creating a reality, then what is in play here is not a case of suspending disbelief, nor is it simply one of make-believe; it is about making belief for, as Nikolajeva notes, “[c]ontrary to the straightforwardness of fairy tales, fantasy accepts more than one reality and more than one truth” (Nikolajeva, “Fairy” 154). Thus, protagonists do not so much willingly suspend their disbelief as they willingly believe.

This understanding of willing belief is more the case given that one tendency in fantasy literature has been to multiply the number of possible worlds available. Diana Wynne Jones, for example, has often drawn on the notion that there might be many realities. Indeed, the multiple-worlds structure is a particular feature of many of Wynne Jones’ novels and, referring to Jones’ work, Colin Manlove makes the point that the “large number of such ‘secondary world’ children’s fantasies” are the result “precisely [of] the postmodernism of the [1980s], and the multiplication of realities, whether temporal or spatial” (*Alice* 161).<sup>41</sup> In her *The Merlin Conspiracy* (2003), for example, Wynne Jones also

posits the multiverse of a myriad other worlds; as one of the protagonists, Nick, remarks, “there are lots of worlds. I know, because I’ve been to some” (34). Roddy, the co-protagonist of the novel, comes from a different ‘world’ (her consensus reality is England, with but a few changes to the “real” England), and the fact that Nick comes from an Earth that most closely resembles the Earth of the twentieth century does not disguise the ambiguity that lies behind the term consensus reality, and also calling into question the “consensus” of consensus reality.

Importantly, this concept of multiple possible worlds suggests both that the fixedness of a locatable and knowable ‘objective reality’ is an unsustainable concept, that “[e]verything in speculative universes, and by association the real world, is mutable” (Pierce 180), and it points to how individual protagonists as agents might make and re-make their *own* spaces; that is, through an act of creating a thirdspace, or even many thirdspaces. On this matter, Nelson Goodman has argued that the lived world of consensus reality is created, “not with hands but with minds, or rather with languages and other symbol systems” (42) such that no one world is ultimately *the* real one and, this being so, it is necessary to question “a single, stable model world” (Herman, “Toward” 136). This need to question is also the case when it comes to fantasy fiction.

The opening up of a thirdspace makes it difficult, therefore, to conceive of the ‘real’ as a single world. This has been dealt with in terms of Possible Worlds theory and, as Joanna Gavins points out, “[t]he central notion underlying all possible-worlds theories is that the world we recognise as our actual world is only one of a multitude of possible-worlds” (11).<sup>42</sup> Tempting as it might be to follow this comment into the application of the Possible Worlds theory to such

fiction, it does not provide an adequate means of assessing the created spaces. In fantasy fiction, there are always gaps in the construction of the spaces, but the model for possible worlds requires any possible world to be logically complete and already a given. Instead, it is necessary to view potential world spaces as always being contingent since this still allows for the possibility of a multiple spaces being potentially there to be constructed and actualised.

Such a multiplicity of spaces awaiting actualisation, rather than be pre-existing, again argues the case for each of these constructed spaces being imagined and actualised individually by protagonists, although it is also something that can be a collective activity. Both aspects of this can be seen, for example, in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911), when the narrator is describing each of the Darling children's imagined worlds such that, quite clearly, there is not just one Neverland, but many individual, and yet interconnected, Neverlands:

Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingos flying over it at which John was shooting, while Michael, who was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it. John lived in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves deftly sewn together. John had no friends, Michael had friends at night, Wendy had a pet wolf forsaken by its parents; but on the whole the Neverlands have a family resemblance, and if they stood in a row you could say of them that they have each other's nose, and so forth. (7)

Indeed, as Susan Ang suggests, Neverland is "the amalgamation of all [the Darling children's] thoughts and something more than that" (111), the real and imagined and more, perhaps.

Of course, this individual (and also collective) creative process of actualising spaces also includes the moment of access to that created thirdspace and, along with the multiplication of available world spaces in more recent texts (although earlier texts are not without multiple possible other spaces), the



possibility of more than one way to gain access to thirdspace has also become more common; no longer should it be seen, therefore, as being simply a matter of dreams or moments of magic.

### *Exits and Entrances*

The spaces that protagonists experience and operate in must also, in some way, include the moment of creation, the getting there. “Fantasy fiction, in both its broad and narrow senses, draws upon [...] continual location and dislocation” (Bould 81) and, in an obvious, structural sense, the transition emerges in fantasy other world fiction for children through a recognisable change, most noticeably, although not consistently, in the form of a portal of some description, which may or may not be magical. These ‘ways in’ should also be considered in the light of the notion of thirdspace, for it is important to be aware of the nature of the transition or movement between, or more properly within spaces, and the difference between real and perceived borders.

As with the variety and complexity of the different worlds that can open up in fantasy fiction for children, the variety of ways into and out of fantasy worlds—which thereby open up the possibility of movement—is also impressively diverse. Nikolajeva believes that “[t]he door is the most important passage fantaseme in fantasy” (*Magic* 76), and it is the case that such portals have been seen to operate as what Iver Neumann would term “boundary-markers of identity,” or “diacritica” (4). If seen in this way, as limina or thresholds, portals can indeed reinforce a binary perspective in their marking and absolute separation of real and unreal places.

Bakhtin says of the threshold chronotope that “[i]t can be combined with the motif of encounter, but its most fundamental instance is as the chronotope of

*crisis* and *break* in a life” (“Forms” 248, original emphasis). However, this moment of crisis or break is not necessarily the case with children’s literature and its protagonists. In terms of the notion of thirdspace, rather than seeing portals as always creating or maintaining a barrier between separated spaces, it is also possible to connect them to thirdspace in terms of the metaphor of the door as proposed by Georg Simmel, who sees the door as a significant sign and space of what he terms the human “will to connection” (171). For Simmel, “life flows forth out of the door from the limitation of isolated separate existence into the limitlessness of all possible directions” (173), and the door thus offers “the possibility at any moment of stepping out of this limitation into freedom” (174); the door, then, is a significant space, one that discloses how “separating and connecting are only two sides of precisely the same act” (172) and are no longer to be considered as contrary terms.

The gaps that portals open up (be they doorways or any other kind of portal) can allow both the ‘outside’ in and the ‘inside’ out. In effect, “there are no insides or outsides, only openings and ways through” (Ingold 35), in a process of reimagining of borders that can position outside as inside and vice versa, as one contiguous space, for “in the unity, the bounded and the boundaryless adjoin one another,” says Simmel, “not in the dead geometric form of a mere separating wall, but rather as the possibility of a permanent interchange” (172–3). Following Simmel’s approach argues for a fluidity of movement between spaces and, as Massey points out,

the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections to that ‘beyond’. Places viewed this way are open and porous. (5)

Putting this notion in relation to literary fantasy, in postmodern fantasy fiction, “the boundaries between reality and the Otherworld become more elusive, and the passage often subtle” (Nikolajeva, “Fairy” 154), although the way such texts operate should not detract from the nature of portals or moments of transition into thirdspace in earlier texts or those not considered to be postmodern.

Returning to the example of *Peter Pan* for a moment, it is notable that, when the Darling children leave the house, they simply leave through the nursery window and fly to Neverland with Peter Pan. Getting to Neverland, it would seem, could not be easier: “second to the right, and straight on till morning” according to Peter (39), although, since Peter “just said anything that came into his head” (39), it seems that these directions are completely irrelevant. As to the real direction the Darling children take, it emerges that had, in fact,

been going pretty straight all the time, not perhaps so much owing to the guidance of Peter or Tink as because the island was out looking for them. It is only thus that any one may sight those magic shores. (43)

That is, there is no actual portal, as such, on this occasion; there is just the moment of movement into a potential thirdspace, a movement that starts within the nursery room of the Darling children rather than when they actually arrive at the island. Other moments of actualisation, of course, can be more obvious and more substantial.

The key, here, is that any magical vehicle that might be present is representative of a number of possibilities for movement into thirdspace. Fredric Jameson sees magic in such novels

not as some facile plot device (which it no doubt becomes in the great bulk of mediocre fantasy production) but, rather, as a figure for the enlargement of human powers and their passage to the limit, their actualisation of everything latent and virtual in the stunted human organism of the present. (278)

Magical devices, therefore, operate not as portals or limina or setting the boundary between real and unreal; rather, they become significant of the moment at which the creation of the spatial is opened up. The magical elements can thus become moments of movement that indicate the potential for spatial practice to occur.

Portals of all kinds, whether they are doors, or the result of potions or magic of some kind, can thus be seen as a space that is not between opposing and different realms of (the same) experience (if anything, the space of the portal is a part of each of the areas it accesses), but rather as indicative of the moment of construction of thirdspace as an act of movement; “[i]t is in this sense,” says Homi Bhabha, “that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing” (5). It is, too, an integral element of the thirdspace, rather than separating different spaces, since it is a spatial position that can also be occupied (however briefly). Perhaps this is why Farah Mendlesohn sees the “portal” in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as “a passage and space [...]. The transition is not instant, but it is to be explored as much as other spaces” (27). As with other such spaces, therefore, these ‘portals’ need not necessarily be present as a separation or divide; this space can be a part of the whole, and the movement into and within in it is a part of the wider activity of creating and experiencing thirdspace as a moment of ‘being there.’

This consideration of the nature of portals does also argue against the idea of the portal being a boundary or threshold into a liminal space. On one level, of course, the notion of the liminal could be seen as closely related to the notion of a literary thirdspace. The liminal space is, as Victor Turner puts it, “interstructural” (“Betwixt” 93), where individuals are in a state that is, he says,

“ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” (*Dramas* 232). The analogy can be taken further because Turner also sees the liminal phase as one of separation from a previous status or social state (“Social” 154), a period of seclusion during which those going through the process are “submitted to ordeal by initiated seniors or elders” (“Social” 154) as a part of the transformative process: “a becoming” (Ritual 94), a passage into adulthood.

Certainly, this does still seem to match very closely to the events within fantasy ‘other’ world novels. Commonly, there is a separation from the original social state (home, or the ‘real’ at least), with adult guides often present to assist young protagonists. In particular, of course, the ‘away’ place is generally decidedly unpleasant and full of ordeals for the protagonists to endure. This process has been perceived as being significant of some form of maturation, a theme that “saturates children’s stories” (Watson, “Introduction” 1) such that rightly or wrongly, “the idea of growth—the investigation of which characters have developed and which have not—is one of the most common principles in the study of children’s and adolescent literature” (Trites 10). In addition, Turner also suggests that an important condition of this liminal state is that “hierarchical orderings of values and social statuses” (“Social” 162) are altered, a reversal that puts individuals outside their “everyday structural positions” (*Dramas* 242), which itself is an element which can be related to Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, a theory that has also been freely applied to children’s literature.

It can be argued, as Victor Watson has done, that “children grow wiser, braver and more generous as time passes” in the ‘other’ world (“Introduction” 1), an idea that Watson broadens to children’s literature in general in that “[m]ost of

the characters in children's fiction are wiser at the end of their narratives than they were at the beginning" ("Introduction." 1). It is certainly the case that the experience of the other world brings new knowledge and experiences or various kinds, but the extent to which child protagonists grow—rather than merely utilising characteristics and qualities they already possess—is debatable. Moreover, when the novel is not genuinely a rites of passage narrative, not genuinely descriptive of a process of maturation, the reader is rarely, if ever, afforded the opportunity to see if that experience or knowledge has effected any significant change. On the matter of whether maturation occurs or not, as Nikolajeva comments,

[a] crucial question in the discussion of any magical there-and-back-again adventure is whether protagonists indeed mature through the exercises in liberation, whether they gain knowledge and experience, and draw conclusions: that is, whether these adventures prepare them for the definite step toward adulthood in the future. (*Mythic* 134)

Indeed, for Nikolajeva, "[c]onventional fantasy novels, whether they actually have an explanation of the adventure as a dream or not, let their protagonists remain totally unaffected by experience in the Otherworld," although she also suggests that "[t]o allow the protagonist to remain unaffected destroys the impact of the story (*Mythic* 134), an outcome that is only problematic if one considers the main purpose of such fiction to be the depiction of growth or maturity.

In the case of Alice, for example, "we are never given any background facts about Alice, except that she has a sister and a cat, and in the context of the novel, it is quite fruitless to speculate what her life is like before and after her adventures in Wonderland" (Nikolajeva, "Beyond" 9). This lack of prior or subsequent information is generally the situation in other fantasy novels too, where return brings no obvious signs of change, or where it is impossible to

make a judgement on the matter because so little is known about the protagonists before the events of the novel. Even if, while the child protagonist is in the other world, there has been a learning process of some kind, after the return, the reader is rarely ever privy to the impact that such development (if indeed it has occurred as result of the new things learned and experienced) has on the child protagonist and the child protagonist's 'real' world.

In fact, it is difficult to find a fantasy 'other' world novel where the notion of change, or development, or even maturation, is not largely inferred rather than read or explained as a part of the narrative itself. This need for inference and supposition is most often because the story frame ends at the moment of return, thus denying the reader access to any insights as to future ramifications. It can also be that protagonists are very often heroes because of the qualities they already possess before setting out, as is the case with Frodo, for example, in *The Lord of the Rings*, where their already existing and intrinsic qualities are what primarily carries them successfully through their adventures. Any claim to substantial development or maturation on the part of the child protagonists is, very often, a speculative endeavour. Child protagonists always return as child protagonists; they might have learned new things, but they ultimately remain children, which marks the away spaces as less likely to be liminal.

It is true that arguing for a liminal nature to a separate 'away' place does seem to match Turner's understanding of the liminal location as an "in-between" place ("Social" 159), one with "few or none of the attributes of the [individual's] past or coming state" (*Dramas* 232). Significantly, however, Turner also points out that, while in the liminal place, individuals have nothing; they have "no

status, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows” (“Betwixt” 98). In contrast, in ‘other’ world fantasy, however temporary the condition might be, child protagonists can be kings and queens, knights and warriors, if only for a day, or take on any role they might wish; “however short, fat, unbeautiful, weak, dreamy, or unlearned individuals may be, they find a realm in which those things are negated by strength” (Pierce 181). Thus, although there are the trials that are associated with the liminal, as Grenby suggests, in fantasy writing, “in a new world where nobody knows the rules, children are not placed at a competitive disadvantage, and consequently feel the equal of adults in a way they do not in their real lives” (166). This process is not one of becoming adult, therefore, nor one of temporarily being adult either.

A further problem, here, relates to the mobility, or freedom of movement, that comes with the notion of liminality. In the original formulation of the liminal, there is no freedom to travel back and forth between states and places. The liminal is the ambiguous location where the individual is outside and preparing to return; the ritual process demands that no return is possible unless the individual has completed the process of transition. In children’s ‘other’ world fantasy fiction, however, protagonists are very often able to go back and forth at will between worlds (which itself could be considered as a marker of the level of constructedness) and should this freedom of movement not be the case, it would be indicative of spatial control having been removed from the protagonist.

J. E. Malpas suggests that movement is always “grasped from within a particular subjective point of view—and so related to that point of view and to the capacities for activity with which that point of view is associated” (166). If



Malpas' understanding is right then, in fantasy 'other' world fiction, a protagonist's movement *through* the places and spaces (both through and away and to the originary location, be it home or some other locus, and the 'other' place or places) can also be seen to be related to the location(s) of that movement rather than fixedly connected to the start and end point alone. As Malpas adds,

[m]ovement, or activity in general, is thus the means by which space is grasped in its complexity, while the possibilities of movement enable the ordering of things in space, since such ordering is always an ordering dependent on our own capacities for moving and acting. (166)

The point Malpas is making is very much evidenced by the degree to which protagonists do, or do not, have mobility, or freedom of movement, within the world space.

In children's 'other' world fantasy fiction, protagonists do usually have a varying degrees of freedom of movement through spaces, and, although some may have little choice about this movement—which in itself speaks to the author's view of the child and the nature of the space that is available—many of them are able to traverse the available spaces at will. Portals being available only to particular individuals is, of course, a common theme in children's fantasy 'other world' fiction and, in a thirdspace context, it suggests that only those with the critical capacity to see the potential can actualise the space, which does not necessarily mean only child protagonists. However accessible the portals are, it does not deny the fact that “[m]ovement is therefore intrinsic to place” (Casey 280, original emphasis), as an integral part of the spatiality of the fantasy narrative, for it is the dynamic of free movement (when it is available) that allows protagonists to operate within alternate and potential recreations of space. This freedom to move also argues against the idea of the liminal as the main

purpose of the spatial for, in its original formulation, the liminal offers no freedom to travel within spaces. The liminal has the individual as outside and preparing to return (with the return commonly to acceptance as an adult within the group), with no return possible unless the individual has fully completed the process of transition to adulthood.

Given this understanding of liminality, the formulation of ‘away’ as a liminal space between other places (which, in children’s ‘other world fantasy is most likely to be based around the home-away binary) is somewhat problematic. It is the argument that such spaces are proving grounds for adulthood, and that children’s fiction essentially relates the necessity and process of growing up. However, as Nikolajeva has observed,

[a] crucial question in the discussion of any magical there-and-back-again adventure is whether protagonists indeed mature through the exercises in liberation, whether they gain knowledge and experience, and draw conclusions: that is, whether these adventures prepare them for the definite step toward adulthood in the future. (*Mythic* 134)

Nikolajeva’s answer is no, and she explains this by noting that “[c]onventional fantasy novels, whether they actually have an explanation of the adventure as a dream or not, let their protagonists remain totally unaffected by experience in the Otherworld,” (*Mythic* 134). If there is no change towards adulthood, then the concept of liminality, of that state of becoming adult, would seem to have the very slenderest of connections to many fantasy ‘other’ worlds.

In light of this apparent inapplicability, the formulation of ‘away’ as a liminal space between other places (which, in children’s ‘other world fantasy is most likely to be based around the home-away binary) is somewhat problematic, not least because such a notion places the focus of the narrative on how outside forces (including the extra-literary critics it should be said) influence protagonists

towards change rather than on the more appropriate understanding of how the protagonists experientially deal with the different worlds.

It is understandable, however, that the idea of the rite of passage is favoured in the literary world, with western myths and more modern narratives often depicting or approximating this self same process. However, a rite of passage and the liminal do not always fit snugly when applied to literary narratives for children, especially as a rite of passage really relates to the process of becoming an 'adult' member of the social group, and so its application to younger child protagonists is tenuous at best unless, of course, there is a desire to have the return as an act of incorporation.<sup>43</sup> It is, then, something of a misunderstanding to describe child protagonists as always having liminal status, not least because, for liminality, the intent is actually and specifically a re-incorporation into the adult mainstream.

Reassessing the liminal in this way, therefore, argues against a notion of in-betweenness for thirdspace since the spatial condition of childhood in fantasy 'other' world novels need not necessarily be located in the shadows of a liminal 'nowhere' as the model might suggest. On the contrary, it can also be found as a function of the familiar, of a 'now here' as "a space of intervention in the here and now" (Bhabha 7) that is a transitory contingent space of movement and agency, invested with meaning or significance.<sup>44</sup> As such, rather than a liminal process always being at work, it is perhaps better to apply Turner's term "liminoid" because the liminoid is not only removed from a rite of passage context, but it is also, says Turner, "individualized" (*Ritual* 52), it is uniquely expressed by each person.

Turner argues that liminoid phenomena develop “along the margins, in the interfaces and interstices of central and servicing institutions—they are plural, fragmentary, and experimental in character” (*Ritual* 54), and “the liminoid can be an independent domain of creative activity” (*Ritual* 33).<sup>45</sup> In a liminoid space, the child protagonist must manufacture, produce, and ultimately ‘perform’ the space as a part of their self-emplacement within it (although, at the same time, the space also acts upon the performance and performer of the space in a dynamic interaction) for, as Turner suggests, “[o]ne *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid” (*Ritual* 55, original emphasis), and this notion of space and its connection to play is one that I will now develop.

### *A Space of Play*

Turner’s notion of the difference in how the liminal and the liminoid are approached—the difference between work and play—brings me to one further way to understand how the spatial modalities of thirdspace might operate in fantasy fiction for children: the idea of games and play.<sup>46</sup> The relationship between children and play is, of course, somewhat axiomatic, but here it seems a useful analogy to consider the thirdspace as a space of either controlled or free enterprise, for only do many children’s fantasy novels have games or play as an important element or motif, but the difference between the nature of games and play can be seen as integral to the agentic action of protagonists in literary spaces.<sup>47</sup>

On a simple level, as Peter Smith suggests,

‘[g]ames’ can be distinguished from ‘play’ by the presence of external rules: that means, rules that are established by convention, to a greater or lesser extent codified, and that provide constraints on what the game players can do. (11–12)<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the more rule-bound and confined the player is, the more likely the action is a game rather than an instance of play. In similar vein, Roger Caillois particularly distinguishes between games and play as a difference between *paidia*, “a kind of uncontrolled fantasy,” and *ludus*, which is based on conventions and rules (13).<sup>49</sup> Although Caillois considers that *ludus* is “a refinement of *paidia*, which it disciplines” (29), Ryan picks up on the distinction made by Caillois, noting that *ludus* games “are strictly controlled by pre-existing rules accepted by the participants as part of a basic game contract, they lead to clearly defined states of winning or losing” (“Narrative” 46). In spatial terms, games that posit a delimited playing area, such as a playground, may offer up a space of and for activity, but it is a ludic space, a specifically designated area, often structured and controlled by adults, and with predetermined outcomes.

This notion of limit and control is also true of board games where, although those such as chess may require the input of the player in response to the situation, they are always played within a fixed area and with fixed rules of conduct. For board games whose outcome relies upon the roll of the dice or similar mechanism, movement is dictated by chance alone in that games such as snakes and ladders, for example, require no decision-making process on the part of the player at all.

In defining play, Caillois also argues that it is “a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement” (6).<sup>50</sup> Similarly, for Johan Huizinga “all play is a voluntary activity. Play to order is no longer play” (7). Play that is mandated is not play, but a game (one played by the rules of another, such as the controlling author) whereas, as Huizinga argues, the primary characteristic of play is “that it is free, is in fact freedom,” and children play “because they enjoy

playing, and therein precisely lies their freedom” (8). Playing can be seen, therefore, as being about the pleasure experienced in the performance of the activity without regard to measures of success and with no concern for winning or losing. Thus, real play is for the sake of it, and it is not predicated upon some ultimate goal, which argues for protagonists’ spatial experience as being either ludic or not related to the freedom allowed for play.

Play as free choice, as a self-motivated and self-organised activity, is no longer within the control of adult authority or adult understandings of the real. As such, when playing actually takes place and is outside of adult control, play itself cannot relate to the idea of children desiring to be (or become) more mature, more wise or more adult. The act of playing is not the act of maturation or growth. This idea, of course, runs counter to conventional wisdom that sees play as part of a process of becoming adult. However, for A. D. Pelligrini and David Bjorklund, “aspects of childhood are adaptive for that time in development only and not as preparations for adulthood,” and they conclude that “the practicing of adult roles in a non-threatening context” (24) is very much a deferred benefit of play, not an immediate one. Indeed, the idea that children play to master skills or their environment seems, say David Cohen and Stephen MacKeith “not just a drab way of putting it, but slightly wrong” (103).<sup>51</sup>

When exercised in playing, therefore, the creative process of creating a thirdspace out of the real and the perceived is, for Margery Franklin, a “reality-creation paradigm” (202), one that is a “complex interweavings of realistic and fantastical elements, basically creative rather than codified, directed toward the creation of new realities” (217). For Ryan, “[t]he pleasures of paidia reside in the free play of the imagination, in adopting foreign identities, in forming social

relations, in building objects, in exploring an environment, and above all in creating a representation” (“Narrative” 46). Indeed, as Nesbit suggests,

[t]he prime instinct of a child at play—I do not mean a child at games—is to create [...]. He will make as well as create, if you let him, but always he will create: he will use the whole force of dream and fancy to create something out of nothing—over and beyond what he will make out of such materials as he has to hand.  
(17)

Real play, therefore, “requires no instructors or umpires or spectators; it uses whatever space and equipment are at hand; it is played for no other reason than pleasure” (Postman 4), and this sentiment is echoed by D. W. Winnicott for whom “[i]t is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative” (54).<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, Winnicott distinguishes between ‘play’ and ‘playing,’ noting that ‘playing’ relates to adults too (40) because nobody can escape “the strain of relating inner and outer reality,” a strain relieved only in “an intermediate area of experience” that is “in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is ‘lost’ in play” (13). However, rather than seeing the unconscious as the Freudian locus of repressed sexuality, Winnicott views it as a creative resource related to a sense of self, and thus, playing is “supplementary to the concept of the sublimation of instinct” (39). In Winnicott’s terms, creativity includes artistic production, but also happens when anyone (young or old) “looks in a healthy way at anything or does anything deliberately” (69), and, as such, is more specifically belongs to “the approach of the individual to external reality” (68). Thus, play arises from human cognition and, far from being confined to childhood, evolves throughout life. This also argues for an ongoing access to playing rather than seeing games as being the product of a shift from the more free forms of child’s play into to a more orderly, rule-governed adult form.

Thus, a child at play is creating, but the child is not entering into “a sham-reality,” but rather “a realization in appearance” (Huizinga 14), where “play is not ‘ordinary’ or ‘real’ life. It is rather a stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own” (Huizinga 8). This stepping out, when coupled to the idea of playing, gives a constructive approach to the real for, as Ira Nadel puts it,

[i]nventing, creating, imagining—these are the real values that result from play. When unsure how to act or to deal with reality, create your own rules [...], establish your own reality which can then be incorporated into your own experience. In this way, play becomes self-discovery; it remains instructive but in personal rather than public terms. (21)

In such play, “children intentionally produce transformations of reality according to their own specifications, mentally transcending their current time, place, and surroundings” (Richert et al. 62), something that Artin Goncu and Frank Kessel call “world building” (24), and thus “[t]he minimal changes that characterize counterfactual imagination may not reflect a limitation, they may be its strength” (Byrne 211) since they draw on the quotidian as part of the resources available to create a space of playing.

Moreover, as Winnicott says, “*playing has a place*,” and this place “is not *inside*” and “[n]or is it *outside*,” since “it is not a part of the repudiated world, the not-me, that which the individual has decided to recognize [...] as truly external, which is outside magic control” (41, original emphases). Thus, for Winnicott, the child at play inhabits a “potential space,” a space which Winnicott contrasts with both the “inner world and also with external reality as it is commonly perceived” (41); as he says, “[t]his area of playing is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world” (51). For Winnicott, it is a space that develops into one that is available to all as part of “a direct development



from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experience” (51). This provides the connection between the private spatial and the social.

In addition, Winnicott also argues for a heterogeneous understanding of this space in that

the area available for manoeuvre in terms of the third way of living (where there is cultural experience or creative playing) is extremely variable as between individuals. This is because this third area is a product of the *experiences of the individual person* (baby, child, adolescent, adult) in the environment that obtains. (107, original emphasis)

In essence, then, it is a thirdspace, the range of which, says Winnicott, “can be minimal or maximal, according to the summation of actual experiences” (107).

James Britton takes up Winnicott’s notion of a third area to argue for seeing play as “an area of free activity lying between the world of shared and verifiable activity and the world of inner necessity—a ‘third area’,” one that is “assimilative” (43, 44).<sup>53</sup> This approach to the world and how it operates can be seen in the way that children do actually play.

It is clear that children do engage in activities that, at one level, have no obvious educational or learning purpose. Although Joanne Thomson and Chris Philo suggest that “the notion of play is very much an adult construct, invented to help adults make sense of what it is that young people seem to be ‘up to’ for much of the time when not following adult instructions” (111), this does not deny that children are doing something active, and often that something involves a creative element. As Bill Michaelis observes, [a]s children, most of us lived in a ‘never-never land’ where we externally acted out our fantasies (57). It is, says Michaelis, a part of playing to create spaces from the spare resources around us:

It may have been the backyard, the imaginative worlds of dolls or cars, the forts built on bunk beds, the pickup games where the rules constantly changed, or the abandoned lot down the Street. In many ways the whole world was accessible and limited only by imagination. We were not locked into a narrow conceptualization of everyday objects. A table would be a fort, or, turned upside down, a ship or motorcycle. (57)

In fact, children are masters of the craft of creating a space for playing—be it as a castle, or a space-station or a desert island—which they can inhabit, but which is clearly operating for them as both a real space (such as the child’s bedroom, for example) and their created space at the same time.

Michaelis’s recognition of this creative space-making in playing also relates in many ways to unpublished ideas on the spatial and children’s inventive playing by Foucault that were originally part of a twelve-minute radio broadcast, made in 1966. Later, via a lecture to architects in Paris in 1967, the ideas were published as “Of Other Spaces,” which presented Foucault’s concept of a heterotopia. A heterotopia operates, says Foucault, to “create a space of illusion that exposes every real place, all the sites of inside of which human life is partitioned, as even more illusory,” or else to create “a space that is other, another real space, as perfect and meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed and jumbled” (“Of Other” 27). This is almost a thirdspace.

Of more interest, here, however, is Foucault’s reliance on the nature of children at play. As Peter Johnson describes it, Foucault’s broadcast opened with an illustrative example of

various children’s imaginative games, mentioning tents and dens in gardens as well as all the games played on or under the covers of the parents’ bed. The children’s inventive play produces a different space that at the same time mirrors what is around them. The space reflects and contests simultaneously. (76)<sup>54</sup>

“Of Other Spaces” did not retain Foucault’s original references to children’s creative space-making. Nevertheless, what Foucault clearly recognises here is the real and imagined nature of the space of playing that children create from the every day that surrounds them, a space that Foucault also sees as operational (albeit in a largely binary manner) in the social every day of adults. More than this, however, is the observation that, even when children play as a group, whilst in one sense they all play within that same created space (knowing it to be both real and unreal at the same time), for each player there is a singular and individual understanding of that space within which they are operating, however similar it might be to the way that others who playing in the space see it (a literary case in point being that of the different Neverlands as discussed earlier in this chapter).

This space is also one, as Winnicott states, that “*depends for its existence on living experiences, not inherited tendencies*” (108, original emphasis). In order to have control over playing in this third area, says Winnicott “one has to *do things, not simply to think or to wish, and doing things takes time. Playing is doing*” (41, original emphasis); it requires movement. To borrow from Deleuze here, games are “sedentary” whereas playing is “nomadic” (*Difference* 282, 283).<sup>55</sup> Winnicott’s “third area” of playing, as a space that clearly connects an individual’s imaginal understanding of their world with their actual perception of that space, is also a space that is consistent with Soja spatial trialectic and Certeau’s notion of everyday (spatial) practices.

Seeing playing in this way, it is possible to see that, in some cases, the child playing a game is marshalled to move within the striated spatial patterns that Deleuze and Guattari mark as confining and limiting, whereas, in playing,

there are possibilities for nomadism, a breaking out of the fixed patterns of place. Indeed, in this difference between the mobility of games and playing (and the mobility of child protagonists within their environments), it is possible to see control of movement as an adult technique for controlling the child for such nomadic mobility is potentially transgressive. This is so with children since

the very requirement of having to seek permission to move in and across certain kinds of space is emblematic of children's subordinate status. The spatial restrictions which adults experience, on the other hand, most often arise from status differentials other than those premised only upon an age-dependency nexus. (Cook 149)

It is also evident in fiction where child protagonists are often confined and constricted, and whose subsequent attempts at personal mobility are often represented as unacceptable, which is a point I develop in subsequent chapters when discussing specific texts.

To end this discussion of thirdspace as a space of playing, I will return to Certeau to mention his distinction between the spatial actions of *strategies* and *tactics*, terms commonly applied to games and playing. In spatial terms, however, these terms are distinguished by the kinds of "operations and the role of spaces" (Certeau 30). Strategies, says Certeau, "conceal beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own 'proper' place or institution" (xx). They are, therefore, largely equivalent to the structured and controlled spatiality of the board game within which the player's movement are confined but, at the same time, they relate to the space of consensus reality. A tactic, in contrast, is "a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a border-line distinguishing the other as a visible totality" (xix); tactics, therefore, "involve a kind of ordinary magic that transforms space when nobody is looking"

(Tonkiss 138). A tactic thus “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance” (Certeau xix), and a tactic is a transformational ‘magic’ for that moment and purpose.

While strategies can create, arrange, and control spaces such as the limited space of the board game, or the equally fixed locus of a spatially inert world (be it a home or away space), tactics use and manoeuvre within these spaces. It is, however, not in the strategies, but in the tactics of the spatial that thirdspace is created. If playing is, as Brian Edwards suggests, “the principle of energy and difference which unsettles arrangements, promotes change and resists closure” (xiii), it thereby “affirms freedom and possibility against restriction, resignation and closure” (17), and the child in creative playing realises a thirdspace space that simultaneously creates a contingent spatial reality. In the same way, the “tactics” and “strategies” available to child protagonists in fantasy fiction empower them, or control them.

The conventionally demarcated space of ludic games is, therefore, the space regulated by logic and rules, whereas a real space exists only in the spatial practice of playing with reality. In such a playing space, boundaries, as I noted earlier when discussing portals, can be seen as arbitrary and subject only to the agency of the actors who utilise that space and its physical characteristics. This understanding means that thirdspace can be a space of playing. This playing, however, is not part of a process of maturation within strictly confined rules of play, nor is it a frivolous pursuit as simply an escape from boredom, but rather it is a performances of childhood agency. Thus, a thirdspace of playing can be seen as a display of the tactics of space-making which relate, on one level at least,

simply to activity for the sake of activity, and to creating a place of their own in a world of consensus reality that is not that of the child.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

In this chapter, I have looked to social concepts of the spatial as being constructed as having relevance for understandings of the nature of children's other world fantasy fiction. The ideas from social theorists that I have employed have helped to see the spatiality of fantasy 'other' world texts as something other than lost or liminal spaces settled uncomfortably between binary extremes. Instead, it has allowed for their consideration in terms of the extent to which they are created, alternate, and contingent spaces, and the degree to which they display the potential to break down any absolute distinction between fantasy and real. I have suggested that the literary space of 'other world' fantasy texts can be seen as being no different from constructed social spaces in that, as Gillian Rose argues for social spatiality, spaces are "practised, a matrix of play, dynamic and iterative" (248). Thus, Hume's somewhat broad description of fantasy as "*any departure from consensus reality*" (21, original emphasis), can actually be reiterated, but with a more specific focus for, in the realm of the spatial, fantasy is indeed a "departure" from consensus reality, but not one that leaves consensus reality behind; the real and imagined operate in tandem.

In addition, I have proposed that, by considering the notion of thirdspace as a way to understand the spatial dynamics of different fantasy 'other world' texts, it is possible to see that the space protagonists occupy can be, with varying degrees of openness and practice on the part of protagonists, "a site of meaningful action for individuals," and it is "more of a dynamic web than a specific site or location" (Oakes 510). By considering the extent to which this is

so, the degree to which protagonists are able to move within an undifferentiated space that is constructed by the agency of the protagonists themselves as a performative act of playing (where the sense of playing is far removed from any idea of romanticised childhood innocence, or that it might lie in opposition to seriousness), other possible ways to view fantasy ‘other worlds’ are made available.

If the possibility of other routes, and the potential for multiple spaces (not all of which will be occupied by the protagonist) is acknowledged, then each narrative potentially holds within itself a number of possibilities that simply remain unactualised. In respect of this idea, as Trish Lunt points out,

[t]he acknowledgement of multiple registers and negotiations (and renegotiations) of space, place, identity and power relations [...], opens up a space of networks of power and subjectivity that displace hegemonically-coded theoretical positionings of us-them, here-there, global-local, home-away. (70)

Based on this multiplicity of spatial possibilities,, the approach I have taken argues against the absolutes of binaries by opening up a spatiality that is no longer subject to the references of centre and margin, or even real and unreal. In this respect, the concern becomes not one of determining what the spaces and places of fantasy ‘other world’ literature for children are, but more a matter of how they are known through what use is made of them, by the movements and actions and playing that create and establish them.

It would seem far more appropriate to understand that, instead of considering fantasy worlds as an *other* world, each of them is more usefully viewed as *another* world, one that exists in relation to the real world and many other potential worlds awaiting actualisation. Depending upon the extent to which worlds are spatially dynamic or not, these ‘other worlds’ are not actually

‘other’ in respect of being opposed to consensus reality at all, but are in effect a particular representation of one of many others all of which potentially exist at the same time. At the same time, this does not argue that all such texts are opened up in the same way. When place is allowed to limit space (as in the binary of home-away-home, for example), it can be seen as a conservative means of ensuring certain required social practices; that is, it seeks to control the protagonists spatially within socially acceptable codes of conduct and being.

This shift in the critical point of view moves to a position that recognises that “the idea of the child itself signifies contradiction, movement, contingency” (Owen 265), and that the spatiality of these narratives is, potentially, unbounded (it is simply not necessarily revealed to the reader). ‘Fantasy’ becomes not a matter of dissolving a putative ‘real’; it is a fixing of ‘a real’ for or by protagonists, a real that is appropriate to the moment. With such a formulation, it is possible to theorise the spatial in this type of fiction in terms of an “open-ended set of defining moments” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 260), as a space of pure performance and activity, of playing, a space within which there are different possibilities within realms of the same experience, the chronotope of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children.

In these texts, then, the fantasy space need not necessarily be seen as metaphorical, as a separation from reality that reflects consensus reality in some way, nor should it be seen as metonymical. Instead, depending upon the level of freedom available to a protagonist, the process of territorialisation of the spatial, can be viewed as an expression of the subject’s role as the agent in enacting place into space. In this sense, the literary thirdspace is entirely a space of praxis, of practised experience which, in turn, points to how the experience of the space



itself, and the movement and activity that takes place within it, are what is important, rather than detailed depictions of the places and landscapes encountered (and it is the case that detailed descriptive passages are rarely found in these texts anyway). This is because, ultimately, the space-making imagination does more than merely produce images of place or space.

The departure that is not escape, therefore, is a spatial imagining that does not take the child protagonist out of the place, or out of the real of consensus reality for “[a] real voyage, by itself, lacks the force necessary to be reflected in the imagination; the imaginary voyage, by itself, does not have the force [...] to be verified in the real” (Deleuze, *Essays* 62–3). Rather, it is a measure of the degree to which child protagonists can creatively enact a space of their own in a form where the extent to which the author allows that spatial imaginary to be both constructed and dwelt in, and for agency to be exercised in the process, suggests alternative ways to read the nature of the adult author–child reader relationship, which I will discuss further in Chapter Four.

By opening up the way fantasy worlds are considered, and by including the possibility of multiple contingent creations, the notion of thirdspace becomes a useful analytical tool with which to examine ‘other world’ fantasy texts. As Soja explains it, thirdspace is “a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings,” and it is “creatively open to redefinition and expansion in new directions” (*Thirdspace* 2). Rather than simply generalising the notion of thirdspace as another catch-all totalising theory that superimposes a grand model onto literary texts without regard for each one’s intricacies and individuality, it is actually the case that it can be applied to each

individual text in order to examine the nature of the spatiality as it is individually presented (although this does not preclude the possibility that different texts will operate in similar ways).

With this in mind, then, and, wary of not generalising from the particular, there is a need to examine different novels in order to see what is happening spatially in each of them. Inevitably, the extent to which this thirdspace is actualised will differ from novel to novel because, as Jack Zipes observes of fantasy novels, each “sets out to contravene not only the laws of nature and the conventions of society and aesthetics, but also seeks to establish itself as unique, to conceive a totally new world which has its own laws and values” (188) despite the similarity of the home-away-home as a pattern that can be overlaid.

Each text, then, will have its own peculiarities. Whilst it will be possible to group different novels in terms of the degree of spatial openness allowed to protagonists, different novels will offer different approaches to spatiality and, therefore, different *degrees* of thirdspace—from the openly oppositional to the less so, from the controlled and minimal, to the expansive and unrestricted—with individual texts offering varying levels of access to this spatiality and varying opportunities for protagonists to exercise spatial agency constructively, to move within spaces and undertake activities of different kinds within those spaces. In the following two chapters, therefore, I will examine a number of texts in light of the notion of thirdspace as “the barrier-less world of the imaginary” (Fox 255) in order to see the extent to which different texts offer the potential for their protagonists to operate within different degrees of created, spatially enabled and enabling locations.<sup>56</sup>

## Chapter Two: No Place Like Home

In my Introduction, I pointed out that, rather than always exhibiting a similar—or even the same—spatiality, different fantasy ‘other world’ novels are more likely to offer spaces to protagonists in varying degrees and kinds. In the next two chapters, therefore, I will apply the theoretical perspectives I outlined in Chapter Two in order to examine different texts and the way they operate within the concept of a thirdspace. However, in doing this, I am conscious that, as Said observes, it is important to recognise “that there is no theory capable of covering, closing off, predicting all the situations in which it might be useful” (241), and the variety displayed in different texts broadly placed within the same genre offers some proof to this point.

Nevertheless, texts where the spaces are not directly constructed by protagonists, or are less open to manipulation by them, can, I have suggested, be considered spatially inert in terms of the understanding of thirdspace that I outlined in the previous chapter. In between this type of spatial display and that of texts that allow protagonists to create and manipulate spaces for themselves, and which can be seen to operate as more spatially active or dynamic, there are numerous different possibilities that might open up based on how authors work with their own understandings of the space of the ‘other worlds’ and the notions of the child and childhood.

The discussion of texts in this chapter begins with Mrs Molesworth’s *The Cuckoo Clock* as an early example of ‘other world’ fantasy that explicitly eschews the process of the child protagonist’s space-making in favour of the contained, restrained and regimented world of the adult. I will then examine C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* series which, on the surface level, offers a much

more open depiction of spatiality than does *The Cuckoo Clock*, and yet does not necessarily move so far from that earlier text in respect of the level of access to and control over spatiality displayed by, in this case, a number of characters rather than just one. Lewis's series will then be compared and contrasted with Philip Pullman's more recent *His Dark Materials* trilogy, particularly in light of the fact that, despite overt ideological differences in terms of religious beliefs espoused by the two authors, their novels both ultimately posit the spatial as controlled by the adult and unavailable to child protagonists other than for the children's contribution to the existing space's well-being. Finally, Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* provides further consideration of the nature of home, and the way in which protagonists can often be seen to learn the lesson that home is best and the urge to explore other spaces needs to be contained, a feature of all the novels, to varying degrees, that I discuss in this chapter.

Thus, I will be looking at this set of texts in terms of a literary thirdspace and examining how, in their different ways and through different forms of presentation of spatiality, they are similar in the way they present spatial opportunities for protagonists. I will also consider how the depiction of spatial confinement in all these particular texts is a way to examine how restrictions on movement can relate to both the level of authorial control and the freedom of protagonists to enact their own spaces. In particular, I will consider how the novels discussed show that contradictory spatial situations can appear to open up spatial possibilities for child protagonists before these potential spaces are ultimately closed down again.

### *Controlled Spaces in Mrs Molesworth's The Cuckoo Clock*

Mary Louisa Molesworth was a prolific writer of novels for children, and *The Cuckoo Clock* is one of the better remembered of her works. It emerged at an interesting time in fantasy writing for children for, as Manlove suggests, early children's fantasy fiction negotiated a path between the two "contrary impulses" of morality and imagination and that, for this reason, fictions that offered a clear cut moral didacticism, "founded not just on the imagination but on moral certainties and an ordered and just universe (Manlove, *Alice* 17) was welcomed. Within these "contrary impulses," *The Cuckoo Clock* tells the story of the young female protagonist, Griselda, who has been sent from her home abroad by her father and brothers in order to stay with her ageing great aunts, Tabitha and Grizzel, who live in a strange old house with an equally old servant, Dorcas. In the course of the novel, Griselda makes journeys to increasingly marvellous places through magical means with the help of a cuckoo from a cuckoo clock in the house.

However, despite the fantasy element in the novel, the spatial for Griselda is never something that she is allowed to master for herself. Even when Griselda is indoors, in the safety of the domestic, her experience of the spatiality of the house is seen to be both confusing and confining. As Griselda observes, "every room has so many doors, and you come back to where you were just when you think you are ever so far off. I shall never be able to find my way about" (13). Apart from its confusing layout, the house is where Griselda receives school lessons, and it is a domestic space that does not, in any way, allow for amusement or playing.

This idea of the protagonist situated in a confined space is a common trope in fantasy other world fiction and, in Griselda's case, as with other protagonists, she clearly wants the opportunity to explore for herself and to play. However, she has no toys or books to entertain her in her free time; she cannot make friends, and she is not allowed to play; she is not allowed to operate within spaces of her making. When the old servant, Dorcas, calls her indoors from what the servant terms 'play,' Griselda indignantly exclaims,

“Play! Do you call walking up and down the terrace ‘play,’ Dorcas? I mustn’t loiter even to pick a flower, if there were any, for fear of catching cold, and I mustn’t run for fear of overheating myself. I declare, Dorcas, if I don’t have some play soon, or something to amuse me, I think I’ll run away.” (36)

This outburst marks not only the way children seem to naturally gravitate towards playing, but also suggests that Griselda feels the need to exercise her creative capabilities in some way or other. Instead, Griselda's freedom to move is confined to a striated location, walking up and down the terrace.

Griselda's frustration at the spatial restrictions placed upon her make it clear that this is not a place where children can be a part of the social matrix. Indeed, quite early in the novel, the ways of the child are considered to be both undesirable and unwanted, as seen in a conversation between Griselda and the cuckoo:

“What’s wrong here, then?” said the cuckoo. “It isn’t often that things go wrong in this house.”

“That’s what Dorcas says,” said Griselda. “It must be with my being a child—my aunts and the house and everything have got out of children’s ways.”

“About time they did,” remarked the cuckoo drily. (32)

The cuckoo's final retort is an early indication that Griselda will not have things her own way, and that “children’s ways,” which clearly includes play and the

freedom to move as one wishes, will not be possible; Griselda appears to be a cuckoo in the nest in the house, out of her proper place.

When Griselda does think about getting a wish from a fairy, her wish is for movement (although, interestingly, she does not wish to be back abroad at home with her father and brothers). As she tells the cuckoo,

“I’d *far* rather have the fairy carpet that would take you anywhere you liked in a minute. I’d go to China to see if all the people there look like Aunt Grizzel’s mandarins; and I’d first of all, of course, go to fairyland.” (36)

Again, there is another instance of Griselda wishing to move within creative spaces, although movement of any kind would fire her imagination it seems. Later, however, when a miniaturised Griselda is in the cuckoo clock, she relinquishes any desire to visit places in consensus reality at all, focusing instead on the spaces that are imagined:

“Oh yes, there are lots of places I wouldn’t mind seeing. Not geography sort of places—it would be just like lessons to go to India and Africa and all those places—but *queer* places, like the mines where the goblins make diamonds and precious stones, and the caves down under the sea where the mermaids live. And—oh, I’ve just thought—now I’m so nice and little, I *would* like to go all over the mandarins’ palace in the great saloon.” (47)

Having been made aware of the possibility to broaden her spatial horizons, she begins to consider the spatial opportunities that might be available to her, and she suggests to the cuckoo that, “if you are a fairy you might take me with you to fairyland” (46), a more creatively conceived of location.

However, the cuckoo refuses her request and states that few have been to fairyland anyway:

“*Some* may have been, but not lots. And some may have thought they had been there who hadn’t really been there at all. And as to those who have been there, you may be sure of one thing—they were not *taken*, they found their own way. No one ever was *taken* to fairyland—to the real fairyland. They may have

been taken to the neighbouring countries, but not to fairyland itself.” (46–7)

This admission by the cuckoo is significant because it suggests precisely that access to a thirdspace is an act of agency on the part of an individual, something that only “some” can achieve. Here, however, for Griselda’s travels to happen at all, she must first make her way up to (and into) the cuckoo clock, high up on the wall. Significantly, to get there, the movement is effected by the cuckoo, not by Griselda herself, for “The clock was far, very far above her reach, and there was no high piece of furniture standing near, upon which she could have climbed to get to it” (18). In addition to the cuckoo being the means of travel, Griselda also needs a magic cloak from the cuckoo in order to travel to other spaces. Clearly, she is given no agency over her own movement or actualise her spatial potential.

Griselda’s first journey, for example, is to the Country of the Nodding Mandarins, which takes her inside the cabinet in the saloon, with Griselda having been miniaturised by the cuckoo. Here, although she enjoys her time, her visit there is cut short by the cuckoo:

“Griselda, it’s time to go.”

“Oh dear, why?” she asked. “I’m not a bit tired. Why need we go yet?”

“Obeying orders,” said the cuckoo; and after that, Griselda dared not say another word. It was very nearly as bad as being told she had a great deal to learn. (62)

Being told that she has a great deal to learn is something Griselda hears frequently from the cuckoo. Here, however, the order is a forestalling of her time in the other place; control of the space remains beyond Griselda and at the behest of another. In fact, as Griselda comes to recognise, “it’s *all* about obeying orders” (154) in a universe where even the motions of the heavens are, as the cuckoo says, the result of “obeying orders” (140), controlled and defined.



Her second major excursion is to Butterfly land. This journey occurs after Griselda shouts in annoyance to the cuckoo:

“I *do* hate winter, and I *do* hate lessons, and I *do* think it would be nicer to be a butterfly than a little girl.” (83)

Once in Butterfly Land, in a sunny beautiful garden, Griselda’s only disappointment is that butterfly land is not truly fairyland as she originally thinks. Here, however, she learns the important lesson that butterflies are industrious creatures (and, therefore, so should she be). As Rosenthal observes of Griselda’s travels, “her two worlds begin to interlock as in ‘real’ life she begins to obey her aunts’ instructions” (Rosenthal 190).<sup>57</sup> At the end of the visit, too, Griselda becomes frightened as the butterflies mass to “kiss” her: “‘Cuckoo, cuckoo,’ she screamed, ‘they’ll suffocate me. Oh, cuckoo!’” (105). She closes her eyes, only to open them again back in bed as though she had been dreaming, a ruse that can be considered as almost a standard frame used to deny the substance of other spaces.

In her final fantasy excursion, the far side of the moon is where Griselda wants to go but, oddly, it *this* side of the Moon that the cuckoo says he cannot take her to, describing it as unpleasant to the point that Griselda recoils from the idea: “‘Horrid!’ said Griselda, with a shudder” (142). The cuckoo even warns Griselda that, if he were to take her to this side of the Moon, “you wouldn’t be yourself when you got there” (143). When Griselda presses him as to what she would be, the cuckoo silences her request: “There are a great many things you are not *intended* to know” (143). Even so, the other side of the moon is something that the narrator describes as “something so strange and unlike what she had ever seen before, that only in a dream could you see it as Griselda saw it” (144); Griselda awakes to find herself on the shores of a “great, strange, silent

sea” (144), a “still, lifeless ocean” (145) where, as Griselda says, “I feel a little frightened” (145). This, again, is not a space that Griselda has either created or has control over.

In each of her fantasy travels, therefore, Griselda is taken in order to learn lessons, one of which implicitly suggests that such fantasy spaces are not as desirable as one might think. It is not surprising, therefore, that Sanjay Sircar believes the novel “depicts the growth of an *exemplary* fictive child for didactic purposes” (“Classic” 164, original emphasis), where the fantasy travel is, he says, “the sugarcoating for the moral pill” (“Victorian” 15). Certainly, movement of any kind into a different spatiality is only possible when Griselda is well-behaved and repents her bad behaviour (she had thrown a book at the cuckoo clock in frustration): “Have you learnt to obey orders yet, Griselda?” asks the cuckoo (40). Alternatively, it comes in response to her behaviour for, as Lynne Rosenthal points out, it is “when Griselda is most rebellious and reverts to feelings of isolation and resistance to growth that the Cuckoo calls to her.” (190).

In terms of the spatial, Griselda’s opportunity to move within such spaces is always controlled. As Karen Smith notes, “Griselda has a desperate desire to believe that other worlds can exist” (*Fabulous* 149) but, when Griselda asks how anyone might get to fairyland, the cuckoo is coy:

“That I cannot tell you either,” replied the cuckoo. “There are many roads there; you may find yours some day. And if ever you do find it, be sure you keep what you see of it well swept and clean, and then you may see further after a while. Ah, yes, there are many roads and many doors into fairyland!”

“Doors!” cried Griselda. “Are there any doors into fairyland in this house?”

“Several,” said the cuckoo; “but don’t waste your time looking for them at present. It would be no use.” (47)

Ultimately, however, it will become clear that there is no point in looking for doors into fairyland herself because, although they might exist, she should not really try to find them.

Instead, Griselda's spatial opportunities are, for a large part of the novel, limited to the interior of the house (a place on which she no opportunity to act independently), for even the Country of the Nodding Mandarins is effectively still within the confines of the house (these figures being decorative household ornaments and the land being inside a cabinet). Thus, as Susan Ang observes, the novel can be seen as a tale "of escape from mundane reality into magical space" (113), a fantasy fiction that suggests children "create alternative worlds as an antidote to the convention bound notions of his or her elders' reality" (Immel et al. 227). This "antidote" is a short-lived escapism, however, "since the maturing child must eventually relinquish the empowering immersion in those early imaginings" (Immel et al. 227). For Griselda, these immersions are thrilling, but not empowering because of the lack of control she has over the places she visits.

There is, therefore, a constant deference to adult requirements and thus, as Ang also notes, "the child never goes unaccompanied by an adult in disguise" (113). Even when the excursions do go further than the interior of the house, such as into the garden to see Butterfly Land, or to the moon, they are always in the company of the cuckoo, and the cuckoo directs Griselda's movement and actions. These trips are taken in order for her to be taught (rather than explore and learn for herself, for this is no adventure story), and when she is transported to such places, she is exposed to elements of control, or else she experiences fear of some kind; both house and garden, then, remain constricting spaces of the domestic and local.

It is only when Griselda moves unaccompanied by the cuckoo, going out into the garden and the wood beyond, that something more expansive seems to happen in terms of space-making. One particular excursion, when Griselda and Phil finally go out into the wood to play, offers a parallel storyline that reinforces the necessity of staying within the ‘real’ (and, concomitantly, that, “Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home”<sup>58</sup>). The path into the wood has “a sort of mystery about it,” and

it might have been the path leading to the cottage of Red-Ridinghood’s grandmother, or a path leading to fairyland itself. There were all kinds of queer, nice, funny noises to be heard there—in one part of it especially, where Griselda made herself a seat of some moss-grown stones, and where she came so often that she got to know all the little flowers growing close round about, and even the particular birds whose nests were hard by. (110)

It may seem that this woodland place has become Griselda’s own space, but although there is a sense of potential in the mention of fairyland, it is never allowed to open up into a thirdspace; that would require the creation of her own space out of the structures of consensus reality.

However it is in this wood, when Griselda and Phil do try to construct their own space (albeit a house), that their subsequent sense of helplessness shows them that they cannot stray from the domestic that is all that has been made available to them, a domestic situation that is still in adult control and suffused with the values of adult society. When the two children try to return from the wood, Griselda becomes disorientated:

They had followed the little path till it came to a point where two roads, rough cart-ruts only, met; or, rather, where the path ran across the road. Right, or left, or straight on, which should it be? Griselda stood still in perplexity. (160)

In this instance, the potential opening up of space is shown to place Griselda into a position of difficulty rather than providing an opportunity. Indeed, it is Phil, a

secondary character (a boy, and also younger than Griselda) who generally seems to have more mobility, although he too becomes lost.<sup>59</sup>

Once again, moreover, it is the cuckoo that arrives to provide direction and lead the lost children back to the correct path:

They had some way to go, for they had wandered far in a wrong direction, but the cuckoo never failed them. Whenever they were at a loss—whenever the path turned or divided, they heard his clear, sweet call; and, without the least misgiving, they followed it, till at last it brought them out upon the high-road, a stone's throw from Farmer Crouch's gate. (161)

When the adult voice directs, it seems, the children should follow, “without the least misgiving.” Indeed, when Griselda and Phil have finally found their way home with the help of the cuckoo, Phil's mother asks what they were doing to have lost their way, and Phil admits that,

“I took Griselda to see a place that I thought was the way to fairyland, and then we stayed to build a house for the fairies, in case they come, and then we came out at the wrong side, and it got dark,” explained Phil.

“And was it the way to fairyland?” asked his mother, smiling.

Griselda shook her head as she replied—

“Phil doesn't understand yet,” she said gently. “He isn't old enough. The way to the true fairyland is hard to find, and we must each find it for ourselves, mustn't we?” (162–3)

Griselda thus learns that ventures into other spaces and the act of creative play provide only a guided lesson in growing into a more adult, responsible young person. The act of playing is usurped and removed from the control of the young. Space is never available for real movement on the part of the protagonists unless it is in the company of one who is more knowing, and even when Griselda does try to create her own space in the wood, it is still a restricted space in that it is shown to be a recreation of the home space (and, here, an adoption of the adult role of homemaker).

A similar situation occurs in Mrs Molesworth's slightly later novel, *The Tapestry Room: A Child's Romance* (1879), where a raven, Dudu, functions very much as does the cuckoo in *The Cuckoo Clock*. Although the children, seven year old Jeanne and eight year old Hugh, appear to want to exercise thirdspace imaginations in their own limited way, Dudu always acts as an adult guide and, despite tours of fantastic places, the children's own search for fairyland at the end of the novel ultimately ends with them emerging onto the far more mundane roof of the house where, perhaps inevitably, they find Dudu waiting for them with a moral lesson about friendship in much the same way as *The Cuckoo Clock* ends.

In *The Cuckoo Clock*, then, it is clear that there is a restricted (and restrictive) spatiality for the child protagonist. Childhood is seen as a developmental stage, where an adult figure (here the cuckoo) guides the child within an ultimately domestic context (for even the fantasy place in which Griselda starts her travels is the cuckoo clock, shaped like a little house). Free movement is not allowed, and the child's ambit is always proscribed; when possibly wider vistas do open up, the children are shown to be unable to take advantage of the possibilities and create space for themselves.

Here, the spatial operates as a closed area for instruction, a playground built by adults rather than a space for playing created by the child, and even that limited place for play is something that must ultimately be renounced in favour of the requirements of adult consensus reality. At the end of the novel, Griselda has a dream about the cuckoo expressing just such a sentiment:

“For you will not need me now,” he said. “I leave you in good hands, Griselda. You have friends now who will understand you—friends who will help you both to work and to play. Better

friends than the mandarins, or the butterflies, or even than your faithful old cuckoo.” (164–5)

Interestingly here, work and play are not opposites but are conjoined and this is no surprise for, as Nadel points out,

[p]lay for the Victorians became the means to teach the very qualities that best characterized Victorian behavior, or at least its ideal: industry, competitiveness, probity, determination, and judgment. (19)

Play as instruction, however, is little more than a game in disguise.

On the nature of the way the places that Griselda visits evolve, Sircar also states that *The Cuckoo Clock* is

the first major full-length English juvenile fantasy that makes an explicit connection between the psychological needs of the protagonist and the compensatory and perhaps imaginary (“phantasy”) nature of the fantasy adventure. (“Locating” 170)

This argument suggests even more strongly that the spatial is largely an unreal figment of the imagination, rather than a constructed and experienced space. The psychological, as an alternative view to the creation of thirdspace, is something I deal with in the next chapter. Clearly, whether the psychological line is taken here or not, the moral of the story is that one must leave behind childish things—including efforts to create one’s own space—and take on the responsibilities of ‘adult’ life such as duty and responsibility.

The next day, it seems, any sense of loss at that fact that access to other spaces is no longer available is more than compensated for by Griselda’s new found adulthood for

when Griselda awoke, her pillow was wet with tears. Thus many stories end. She was happy, very happy in the thought of her kind new friends; but there were tears for the one she felt she had said farewell to, even though he was only a cuckoo in a clock. (165)

After all that has happened, the magical guide has now become for Griselda “only a cuckoo in a clock.” Thus, Griselda is seen to grasp the fact that, however painful, important lessons must be learned if one is to correctly fit in to the defined spatiality of her social milieu and be a part of adult society, and she has shown herself to have developed that ‘adult’ awareness by eschewing any wish to look for other spaces, thirdspace or otherwise.

The lack of opportunity for Griselda to create anything other than a pale imitation of a thirdspace, seems to send the clear message that such other worlds and other spaces are to be sought for only in very early childhood if at all, they can only be temporary fancies if considered and, even then, they are acceptable only when they can provide for the kind of moral instruction that is appropriate for young (Victorian) children. Thus, although Karen Smith observes that Griselda “finds herself going back and forth as easily as if she had done it all her life,” and she “re-orient[s] herself quite well to the variety of magical worlds to which she is exposed and enjoys the variety” (*Fabulous* 149), it seems that the child may be permitted to toy with the idea of such spatial playing (albeit in a fairly limited and fanciful way), but such ambitions must be rejected ultimately in favour of a return to the orderly and controlled environment of the home. The length of time spent back in the home at the end of novel also suggests that it is the more desirable location.

There is, of course, a certain inevitability that Victorian texts will show space, and access to it, as restricted for, as Roderick McGillis notes of this type of narrative,

[o]nce the adventure in a fantastic realm is over it is best to leave it behind, perhaps even to forget it, since it threatens to remove permanently those who experience it [...] from the duties and responsibilities of mature social activity. (19)



Indeed, in *The Cuckoo Clock*, there is only the slightest hint of the possibility of freedom of movement, a freedom that is then removed through a more imperative sense of moral instruction, self-restraint, and with an emphasis on duty and self-sacrifice: traditional, socially required, adult qualities. Griselda is seen to be incapable of (or, at the very least, discouraged from developing) the kind of constructive imagination that is required to create a thirdspace, and she has neither control over access to new spaces, nor control over the spaces themselves when she is taken to them; the spatial, therefore, is not of her own making. She is, then, a child protagonist bound to walk the planned pathways and places of a Victorian world.

### *The Confused Spatiality of C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia*

One account, typified by Manlove, sees the trend in fantasy fiction after the Victorian period, as a development and expansion of spatial opportunities for child protagonists, and that, unlike Mrs Molesworth's texts, which emerge from a Victorian sensibility and a particular approach to the construct of childhood, more recent texts will operate to develop a more accessible thirdspace, one for more liberated child protagonists. Manlove asserts, for example, that the development of English children's fantasy can be grouped into different periods and that "[t]hese periods, from the Victorian to the 1990s, tell a story of the slow liberation of children's fantasy from adult control" (*Alice* 198). However, Manlove wisely includes a caveat in his assessment of the post-Victorian children's fantasy novel: "Yet at the same time there are ways in which it repeats itself" (*Alice* 198). "It," here, refers to a more restricted sense of spatiality.

It is not necessarily the case that the passage of time brings progressively more open understandings of, and access to, thirdspace. This can be seen in C. S.

Lewis's seven book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Apart from *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), where there is no travel between worlds because the events are contemporary with those in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the series tells the story of various child protagonists (and some adults) and their travels to, and adventures in, Narnia, a marvellous world of magic and talking animals, where the protagonists assist Aslan, the lion, as he both creates the world and maintains order in it. In this series, the other world takes on more substance and plays a far larger role in the scope of the narrative than do the fantasy places of *The Cuckoo Clock*, where the majority of the narrative occurs within the confines of the house. In fact, very little is mentioned of the 'home' space in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (although its physical absence will not necessarily detract from its anchoring position).

For Manlove, the Narnia books present the spatial in such a way that "we and the children are prevented from settling to any one level of reality: always there is something further beyond what appears" ("Narnia" 90). However, compared to *The Cuckoo Clock*, where no effort is made to present the places that Griselda visits as being anything other than fantasy and illusion, *The Chronicles of Narnia* show a concerted effort to emphasise the 'reality' of Narnia's existence.

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the Pevensie children—Lucy, Susan, Peter and Edmund—have been evacuated from London to the house of Professor Digory Kirke in the country, where Lucy and then the other children find their way into the world of Narnia. Professor Kirke's explanation to Susan and Peter as to how, logically, Narnia must exist as a reality and that it is more than simply the product of Lucy's (or the reader's) fanciful imagination. When

Peter retorts, “if it was real why doesn’t everyone find this country every time they go into the wardrobe,” and that “if things are real, they’re there all the time” (56), the professor is clear that this is no hindrance and that such places do, indeed, exist:

“But do you really mean, sir,” said Peter, “that there could be other worlds—all over the place, just around the corner—like that?”

“Nothing is more probable,” said the Professor. (57)

Similarly, at the end of *Prince Caspian* (1951), when the children return to consensus reality, Edmund bemoans the fact that he has left his new torch in Narnia, suggesting that physical objects can have an existence in both worlds, with both worlds being equally real. This idea of Narnia as a real place is something that is returned to later in the series, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), when Edmund and Lucy are discussing their previous adventures in Narnia, the narrator gives a more specific confirmation when noting that Narnia “was the name of their own private and secret country,” and then adding that,

[m]ost of us, I suppose, have a secret country but for most of us it is only an imaginary country. Edmund and Lucy were luckier than other people in that respect. Their secret country was real. They had already visited it twice; not in a game or a dream but in reality. (3)

Here, in addition to claims for the real nature of Narnia, the narratorial voice also suggests that ownership of Narnia belongs to the children; it was “their” country.

At times too, there is a sense that the child protagonists are always ‘home’ and do not leave that space, which itself might argue for the creative construction of the space of Narnia. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when the Pevensie children go into Narnia together for the first time, they discuss the

moral issue of taking something that is not theirs, the fur coats hanging up in the wardrobe:

“I am sure nobody would mind,” said Susan; “it isn’t as if we wanted to take them out of the house; we shan’t take them even out of the wardrobe.”

“I never thought of that, Su,” said Peter. “Of course, now you put it that way, I see. No one could say you had bagged a coat as long as you leave it in the wardrobe where you found it. And I suppose this whole country is in the wardrobe.” (62)

Thus, as the children themselves theorise, in a sense, they never actually leave the house to get to the other world.

This is also true of *The Magician’s Nephew* in that the magic rings transport Digory and Polly from the attic room of the house, and of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, where Lucy, Edmund and Eustace are in the house before being pulled into Narnia through the painting. Thus, at least until the last book in the series, the reality of Narnia is constantly emphasised. However, as with the places that Griselda visits, the world of Narnia is not actually one of the protagonists’ making, and nor do they exercise any control over its spatiality.

Throughout most of the series, the worlds available to protagonists are limited to just two: the consensus reality of England, and the ‘other’ world of Narnia. *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955) opens up the possibility of the existence of a greater number of other worlds (although only three of them are actually seen: consensus reality, Charn, and the newly founded Narnia). It is in this novel that the creation of Narnia is revealed as part of the narrative about two young neighbours, Digory Kirke (who, as an adult, will be the professor in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) and Polly Plummer, and their travel to other worlds. Deceived into travelling between worlds by Digory’s Uncle Andrew, and with the help of magic rings, the children find themselves taken from Uncle Andrew’s

study not into another world as such, but rushing up to the surface of a pool in the Wood Between the Worlds.

However, although neither child makes the initial journey voluntarily, once they arrive at the Wood Between the Worlds, Digory realises that it is “a sort of in-between place” (34), with each pool leading to a different universe, and that they can go anywhere by jumping into different pools. Arguably, having arrived in the Wood Between the Worlds by trickery, it is now that the two children realise the spatial opportunity and seek to exercise autonomous choice over movement (even to the point of recklessness, before Polly points out they should mark the pool which will take them home). The Wood Between the Worlds operates, therefore, very much like the attic space that connects Digory and Polly’s houses in London. It is while in this attic space that they find a door into Uncle Andrew’s study, which effectively curtails their playing as they become embroiled in Uncle Andrew’s machinations.

In fact, Digory and Polly’s first adventure together occurs when exploring the attic space that straddles their two homes. Compared to Narnia, this is a potential space for playing for, as Kort notes, “the attic is an expansive, alternative world, a spacious exception to the rest of the house,” that has both “rational and imaginative potentials” (*Lewis* 55). Digory’s description of the space under the eaves of the houses in which he and Polly live is revealing:

“Think of our tunnel under the slates at home. It isn’t a room in any of the houses. In a way, it isn’t really part of any of the houses” (34).

In this, the attic space seems very similar to the Wood Between the Worlds as an unactualised thirdspace that is a location for playing. However, when the two children go back to London after their first excursion to the Wood between the

Worlds, Polly is about to go back to her own house through the tunnel under the eaves, but

that dark place among the rafters which had seemed so exciting and adventurous a few hours ago, seemed quite tame and homely now. (74)

The potential of the attic space, and therefore thirdspace, no longer appeals; the spatial has been closed down.

Whilst in the Wood between the Worlds, Jill and Digory's choice of which pool to jump into and explore takes them to Charn, where they unwittingly wake the evil Queen Jadis (later to be the wintry ruler in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*). After Jadis follows the children back to London and causes mayhem, the children manage to bring her back to the Wood Between the Worlds using their magic rings. They jump into a pool hoping it will take them to Charn, but it is not where they arrive:

“This is not Charn,” came the Witch's voice. “This is an empty world. This is Nothing.”

And really it was uncommonly like Nothing. There were no stars. It was so dark that they couldn't see one another at all and it made no difference whether you kept your eyes shut or open. Under their feet there was a cool, flat something which might have been earth, and was certainly not grass or wood. The air was cold and dry and there was no wind. (96)

However, this world is then filled with the song of Aslan as he sings the world into life; this, then, is the founding of Narnia. Thus, the attic space that promised a space of playing for the protagonists is overshadowed by spaces that are created by another, the ultimately powerful lion, Aslan.

Here, however, the words of Puddleglum in *The Silver Chair* (1953) come to mind. When the Queen of Underland is attempting to dissuade

Puddleglum, the children and the Prince of their belief in Overland (the world above the surface) and in Aslan, Puddleglum responds by saying,

“Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that’s a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We’re just babies making up a game, if you’re right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That’s why I’m going to stand by the play-world.” (164)

Thus, having opened up and then closed down the potential thirdspace that is represented by the attic space in *The Magician’s Nephew*, this novel gives a description of Narnia as just such a thirdspace, a “play-world” created by others rather than Aslan. This is an interesting aside, however, in a continuous stream of information that points only to Narnia as Aslan’s creation.

Moreover, not only is the world of Narnia shown to be the product of an entity other than the child protagonists, but also the nature of movement between Narnia and consensus reality is not one that protagonists have control over. Child protagonist’s movements into Narnia are not a matter of their own choice and, as the narratorial comment from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* notes about how the Pevensies had entered Narnia, “They had got there of course by Magic, which is the only way of getting to Narnia” (3). The question is, however, whose magic?

In fact, the children are usually summoned into Narnia by some mechanism, be it Aslan or some other individual or device. I have already mentioned how, in *The Magician’s Nephew*, Uncle Andrew tricks Polly by getting her to touch a yellow ring devised to effect travel between worlds, with Digory tricked into following her and taking two green rings that will enable

them both to return to consensus reality. However, consistently in the series, child protagonists do not make the journey voluntarily (even though, after their initial visit, they may wish to return). As explained in final book of the series, *The Last Battle* (1956), “the Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve were brought out of their own strange world into Narnia only at times when Narnia was stirred and upset” (81).

In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, for example, Lucy’s first entry into Narnia is completely unplanned (and, therefore, not created by her); she stumbles upon the way in through the wardrobe whilst hiding from her siblings during a game of hide and seek. When the other three children finally accompany Lucy into Narnia through the wardrobe, their sole aim is to hide from the Professor’s housekeeper, Mrs Macready, and the narrator even suggests that possibly, “some magic in the house had come to life and was chasing them into Narnia” (60). Their eventual return at the end of the novel is also something of a chance event when they happen upon the portal that will return them to the world of consensus reality, and it is only a sense of curiosity (mingled, it is true, with some vague memory of the place they find themselves in) that makes them push their way back through the coats until “they all came tumbling out of a wardrobe door into an empty room” (195).

Significantly, after this return from Narnia, the wardrobe is no longer available to them; the opportunity for movement within spaces is not within the children’s control. As the Professor tells them,

“I don’t think it will be any good trying to go back through the wardrobe door to get the coats. You won’t get into Narnia again by *that* route.” (196)



The door, it seems, has been closed to them. Reassuringly, however, the Professor continues:

“Yes, of course you’ll get back to Narnia again some day. Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia. But don’t go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don’t *try* to get there at all. It’ll happen when you’re not looking for it.” (196–7)

The children should not even try to enter Narnia using their own devices because to do such a thing would be fruitless. Thus, although there is movement, it is not initiated by the protagonists, but is foisted upon them.

Similarly, in *Prince Caspian* (1951), set one year after the Pevensie children’s first trip to Narnia, there is again no special or identifiable portal between spaces; the Pevensie children are simply whisked from a railway station platform as if by magic. In fact, the magic is the sounding of Susan’s horn in Narnia by Prince Caspian, calling them back to Narnia’s aid once again:

“Great Scott!” said Peter. “So it was the horn—your own horn, Su—that dragged us all off that seat on the platform yesterday morning! I can hardly believe it; yet it all fits in.”  
 “I don’t know why you shouldn’t believe it,” said Lucy, “if you believe in magic at all. Aren’t there lots of stories about magic forcing people out of one place—out of one world—into another? I mean, when a magician in *The Arabian Nights* calls up a Jinn, it has to come. We had to come, just like that.”

“Yes,” said Peter, “I suppose what makes it feel so queer is that in the stories it’s always someone in our world who does the calling. One doesn’t really think about where the Jinn’s coming from.” (83–4)

As Edmund comments: “Golly! It’s a bit uncomfortable to know that we can be whistled for like that” (84). The children are, it would seem, not in control of their own movements; rather, their movement is at the behest of others, which suggests that their control over the spaces they move within are also not in their control.

At the end of *Prince Caspian*, it is specifically Aslan who is seen to arrange the Pevensie children's return to consensus reality (along with the Telmarines, pirates from consensus reality who hundreds of years earlier had entered Narnia through a portal and then had taken over the lands thus leading to the events of this book and the need to rescue Prince Caspian and restore him to his rightful position). As Aslan explains to them,

“You came into Telmar from another place. You do not belong to this world at all. You came hither, certain generations ago, out of that same world to which the High King Peter belongs.” (180)

Indeed, the Telmarines original entry into Narnia is something of an anomaly in terms of movement into Narnia. Prior to this, the series has suggested that only certain individuals can enter Narnia, and yet clearly the Telmarines found their own way into the land in some way that is never fully explained.

For the movement of return, it is Aslan again who sets up a portal to return those Telmarines who want to leave Narnia for their own world, which consists of

two stakes of wood, higher than a man's head and about three feet apart. A third, and lighter, piece of wood was bound across the top uniting them, so that the whole thing looked like a doorway from nowhere to nowhere. (179–80)

After the Telmarines leave Narnia (their destination in consensus reality is not revealed), the Pevensie children return through the same portal. However, when they emerge they find themselves, again, on

a platform in a country station, and a seat with luggage around it, where they were all sitting as if they had never moved from it—a little flat and dreary for a moment after all they had been through, but also, unexpectedly, nice in its own way, what with the familiar railway smell and the English sky and the summer term before them. (186)

They are, once gain, exactly where they started from, having been taken and returned without their express intent.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Edmund and Lucy are staying with their aunt and uncle, and they, along with their cousin Eustace Scrubb, are summoned into Narnia through a painting on the wall in order to go on a mission to find lost friends of Caspian's father. They sail on the Dawn Treader across seas to the End of the World. When the Dawn Treader finally reaches as far as it can go, and the only thing ahead is, apparently, the End of the World, the ship turns about and sets sail westwards for home, whilst Lucy, Edmund and Eustace (and the mouse Reepicheep) carry on travelling eastwards in a boat until they finally arrive at a place where

they got the strangest impression that here at last the sky did really come down and join the earth—a blue wall, very bright, but real and solid: more like glass than anything else. (207)

Here they meet Aslan, in the form of a lamb and, after learning that it is not yet time for them to go to Aslan's country and that, as Aslan tells them, "the door into Aslan's country is from your own world" (208), it is once again Aslan who organises the return: "And now come; I will open the door in the sky and send you to your own land" (209). The passive children wait:

Then all in one moment there was a rending of the blue wall (like a curtain being torn) and a terrible white light from beyond the sky, and the feel of Aslan's mane and a Lion's kiss on their foreheads and then—the back bedroom in Aunt Alberta's home in Cambridge. (210)

Once more, they are returned, without action on their part, to consensus reality, their task for Narnia done.

Although the protagonists in *The Silver Chair* have changed—the story now tells of Eustace and Jill Pole, who are away from home at school,

Experiment House—the situation is no different; the nature of Narnia, and entry into it, remains the same. As Eustace and Jill try to escape from school bullies, Eustace’s mind turns to Narnia and the possibility of finding a way there. However, this is as close as any of the children ever get to creating their own way into Narnia. Eustace and Jill run to a door in a wall that would take them outside the school grounds and enable them to escape the pursuing bullies. The door is usually locked but, on this occasion, it opens and Eustace shouts to Jill:

“Quick!” said Scrubb. “Here. Hold hands. We mustn’t get separated.”

And before she quite knew what was happening, he had grabbed her hand and pulled her through the door, out of the school grounds, out of England, out of our whole world into That Place. (18–19)

Here, Aslan even directly tell the children that they have travelled to Narnia at his will: “The task for which I called you and him here out of your own world” (28); that is, to rescue King Caspian’s son, Rilian. The rescue effected, and Narnia set to rights again, Eustace and Jill are returned by Aslan but, this time, they simply walk out of Narnia and back into consensus reality:

He led them rapidly through the wood, and before they had gone many paces, the wall of Experiment House appeared before them. (215)

In Aslan’s power alone it seems is the ability to freely move between spaces just as it his in his power alone to create the spaces.

For Manlove, the series “raises the question of whether our own world is more or less real or fictional than Narnia,” and he decides the answer comes “in *The Last Battle* when both are shown to be of equal (un)reality” (“Narnia” 90). Indeed, *The Last Battle* tells of one final move into Narnia, when the King of Narnia, Tirian, captured, tied to a tree, and in despair at Narnia’s plight, calls out for help from Aslan and the children who have always come to Narnia’s rescue

in the past. He falls into a dream vision and sees the seven who had been to Narnia. When he awakens, he believes it was just a dream but,

Almost at once there came a bump, and then a second bump, and two children were standing before him [. . .] They had in fact simply appeared from nowhere. (46)

It is Jill and Eustace, come to rescue him, whisked away whilst on a train and on their way to find the magic rings, originally used by Digory and Polly, so that they can force their way into Narnia. This does not happen, of course, because it is not possible to move oneself into Narnia; instead, “suddenly there came a most frightful jerk and a noise: and there we were in Narnia” (51). In consensus reality, the children are in a train crash, and immediately they find themselves talking with King Tirian. They do not learn, until later, that they are dead, and the spatiality of Narnia takes on a new dimension by making the difference between real and unreal yet more complex.

Now, with the child (and adult) protagonists no longer alive, the space of Narnia becomes no longer simply that of a ‘real’ Narnia reached from the ‘real’ of consensus reality. As the protagonists look down from a vantage point from on high, Lucy finds that she can see Narnia and England at the same time. As the fawn, Mr Tumnus explains,

“That country and this country—all the real countries—are only spurs jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan. We have only to walk along the ridge, upward and inward, till it joins on.” (164)

However, they are not in the same Narnia, as Lucy realises:

“I see,” she said. “This is still Narnia, and more real and more beautiful than the Narnia down below, just as it was more real and more beautiful than the Narnia outside the stable door! I see... world within world, Narnia within Narnia...” (162–3)

Mr Tumnus reveals that the Narnia the children have been to before is not actually the real Narnia, just as the England of consensus reality is not the real England—it is “the Shadowlands” (165)—and, as the faun says,

“But you are now looking at the England within England, the real England just as this is the real Narnia.” (163)

The original Narnia, the space to which the children had been travelling, is no longer the real Narnia, and it is Digory who explains the new spatiality in more detail:

“When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan’s real world.” (153–4)

This ‘new’ Narnia, the copy Narnia, throws into question understandings of much of the spatial representations that have gone before. The real Narnia is “as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream” (154), and this Platonic understanding of an ideal space set against the imperfect other copies questions the validity of the spaces and the spatial practices that have comprised most of the series. In effect, it provides a decisive separation of spaces as either real (albeit here spiritually so) and imperfect unreal.

That Lewis should both open and close doors for child protagonists is perhaps also a condition of his time and his own personal convictions. Here, then, a sense that only in childhood can there be there the unfettered creativity to walk within spaces that are not the fixed and familiar of consensus reality is ultimately tempered and over-ruled by a different and more theological concept of spatiality that does not rely upon the world of the real nor of the imagination, nor on any combination of the two.

Considered in this more spiritual context, the structure of the Narnia series is, as Mervyn Nicholson observes, is framed within

a cosmic plot of divinely ordained creation, destruction and re-creation. Everything in the world [Lewis] invents is connected to this framework and to a divine creator. Everything that happens is part of a divine scheme. (21).

Ultimately, perhaps, this is why Manlove believes that Lewis' fantasies "have little or nothing to do with this world, being set in a Christian fairyland which is reached by the 'cut off' device of walking through the back of a wardrobe" and thus "Narnia is a relatively closed system. Children from this world are drawn into it, and do things for it, but there is scarcely a glance back at life in our world" (*Alice* 83). There does not necessarily need to be a "look back," of course, in the context of thirdspace, but the closed nature of Narnia and the fact that the children are "drawn" into it are telling indications of an 'authorly' spatiality at work.

The child protagonists return, their job done, the space closed to them once again. Indeed, although Narnia clearly remains in existence, throughout the series (until *The Last Battle*), the child protagonists' return effectively closes off that space to them until a time they are not able to determine for themselves. Thus, the world of Narnia, and entry into it, is not a creative or constructive act on the part of protagonists, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* offers a confused picture of spatiality. As Karen Smith notes of authors of Lewis's time, they "sought to expand the world of the child" but, at the same time, they felt the need to "present an ordered cosmos to the audience; chaotic situations were avoided" (*Fabulous* 223). In a sense, however, these two ambitions are largely incompatible for, although the *Chronicles of Narnia* series does, at times, give glimpses of the potential of playing in a thirdspace, and even hints at possibilities

of child protagonists being enabled to do so, the series is complicated by the dynamics of the forces that operate within it. These forces both recognise the creative potential of the child protagonist in terms of the spatial, and argues for the overarching need to control that creativity for a greater purpose within a spatial that is, ultimately beyond any real, be it consensus reality or the real of a constructed thirdspace.

***Castles in the Air: Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials***

As with the time difference between *The Cuckoo Clock* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy emerged some fifty years after the Narnia books, in a world that was radically different from Lewis's in terms of mobility and understandings of the spatial. For Manlove, for example, "Pullman's books are based on a continual finding out of more about how the universe works, and we explore ever outwards, into worlds beyond" (*Alice* 190), and David Gooderham describes the trilogy as being "markedly different from what has gone before" (157). At first sight, therefore, it may seem odd to set the work of Pullman in the same chapter as that of Lewis, especially given Pullman's criticism of the Narnia books, which is based primarily on theological differences.<sup>60</sup> However, whatever ideological differences there might be between the two authors, in spatial terms the similarities vastly exceed the differences. On a basic level, both series relate the narratives of child protagonists who travel from their own consensus realities into other worlds and encounter such things as witches and magic and talking animals (in Pullman's case, armour wearing bears and dæmons—the individual's soul or spirit in visible, animal form—amongst others). More than this basic connection,



however, is the similarity in the way that both series seemingly open up the spatial for child protagonists, only to close it down again.

The trilogy narrates the story of two twelve year olds, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry, both from different worlds, who each venture into other worlds against a wider backdrop of revolution against the overbearing powers of a religious authority in Lyra's world by opening up ways into other worlds. The two meet, and they are eventually to prove a key element in the demise of the theocracy in Lyra's world. In his own world, Will, with his father missing, looks after his psychologically troubled mother as though she were the child. Thus, Will's life and opportunities have already been curtailed by his role as carer and, before Will first discovers an opening into another world, his main concern is about maintaining the family home, as is explained in *The Subtle Knife* (1997):

What Will feared more than anything was that the authorities would find out about [his mother], and take her away, and put him in a home among strangers. Any difficulty was better than that.  
(10)

Indeed, for Will, 'home' was "the place he kept safe for his mother, not the place others kept safe for him" (*Subtle* 272). Lyra, apparently orphaned (her real parents, Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel are both alive, but Lyra is ignorant of this fact at the outset), lives in Jordan College, in her world's Oxford, and loosely under the control and guidance of the scholars of the college.

Will may not have the opportunity to play because of his restrictive familial circumstances, but this is not the case for Lyra, at least at the start of the trilogy. In *The Golden Compass* (1995), Lyra's personal space is a narrow, "shabby bedroom on Staircase Twelve" at Jordan College (84) in the Oxford of her world, but she has the run of the buildings, and, "[w]hat she liked best was clambering over the College roofs [...], or racing through [Oxford's] narrow

streets” (31). When Lyra discovers there are underground elements to the College, “tunnels, shafts, vaults, cellars, staircases,” she “abandoned her usual haunt, the irregular alps of the college roofs, and plunged [...] into this netherworld” (43). Although Lyra is also dimly aware at the same time that this “wasn’t her whole world” (33), her “world and delight” (33) revolve around her escapades in and around Jordan College and the environs of Oxford and her ability, it seems, to wander where she pleases; “[t]his was her world” (55). In essence, Lyra treats the places of her Oxford as a personal space of playing.

Indeed, when asked by Lord Asriel about how she occupies her time when she is not studying, Lyra confirms that playing is her main occupation: “I just play. Sort of around the College. Just . . . play, really” (34). Indeed, it is probably the case that Lyra’s only real freedom of movement in the series is when she is playing in her Oxford. However, such activities are dealt with pejoratively by a narratorial voice that describes the playing Lyra less than favourably: “In many ways Lyra was a barbarian” (31), and “a coarse and greedy little savage, for the most part,” one who “had passed her childhood, like a half-wild cat” (33). The negative voice aside, there is no indication that Lyra’s play is necessarily creative or of a kind that constructs thirdspace worlds.

However, the denigration of play is not necessarily a problem when considering the trilogy from a spatial perspective given that the existence of ‘other worlds’ is an explicit feature of the narrative. Pullman himself, explains the principles in operation in the pages preceding the start of the first book, *The Golden Compass*, that it

forms the first part of a story in three volumes. The first volume is set in a universe like ours, but different in many ways. The second volume is set partly in the universe we know. The third volume will move between the universes. (n.pag.)<sup>61</sup>

Lyra first learns of the existence of these other worlds from Kaisa, the goose dæmon of the witch, Serafina Pekkala, for the witches live “so close to the place where the veil between the worlds is thin” (*Golden* 154). Later in *The Golden Compass*, As Lyra travel north by boat to rescue children that have been abducted, Kaisa explains the witches’ understanding of multiple worlds:

“Witches have known of other worlds for thousands of years. You can see them sometimes in the Northern lights. They aren’t part of this universe at all; even the furthest stars are part of this universe, but the lights show us a different universe entirely. Not further away, but interpenetrating with this one. Here on this deck, millions of other universes exist, unaware of one another ....” (164)

Lord Asriel also confirms to her that there are “uncountable billions of parallel worlds” (330), a multiverse in fact, although the existence of these many worlds is not well received by everyone in Lyra’s world.

For the authoritarian powers of Lyra’s world, such thoughts and ideas regarding the existence of so many other, real, worlds is seen as antithetical to their beliefs. As the Master of Jordan College explains, this relates to the so called Barnard–Stokes heresy:

“As I understand it, the Holy Church teaches that there are two worlds: the world of everything we can see and touch, and another world, the spiritual world of heaven and hell. Barnard and Stokes were two—how shall I put it—renegade theologians who postulated the existence of numerous other worlds like this one, neither heaven nor hell, but material and sinful. They are there, close by, but invisible and unreachable.” (*Golden* 28–9)

As such, the Church enforced real/unreal binary, cannot permit dangerously imaginative notions of multiple worlds where, as Lyra’s mother, Mrs Coulter recalls in the trilogy’s final volume, *The Amber Spyglass* (2000),

there were more spatial dimensions than the three familiar ones, that on a very small scale, there were up to seven or eight other dimensions, but that they were impossible to examine directly [...]. Folds within folds, corners and edges both containing and being

contained: its inside was everywhere and its outside was everywhere else. (353)

However, despite the heretical nature of such an idea, as the Master points out, “there seem to be sound mathematical arguments for this other-world theory” (*Golden* 28), and the search for ways to prove the existence of these worlds, to open up ways to get to them, and the relationship between them is a main feature of the trilogy’s narrative arc.

Thus, early on in the trilogy, the narrative seems to be setting up a contrast between the imaginative belief in many worlds as valid in its own right, and the opposing, more rationalist (although couched in theological terms) binary understanding of just one consensus reality and its spiritual counterpart. The theological position aside, this indication of a wealth of spatial possibilities would seem to augur well for the protagonists’ experience of thirdspace, and at least one critic considers that “Pullman’s most distinctive contribution to the fantasy genre is his blurring of the line that separates the ‘real’ from the fantasy worlds” (Hatlen 75) since, in its cosmology, *His Dark Materials* draws on ideas from quantum mechanics such that all worlds in the trilogy are presented as equally real.<sup>62</sup>

Based on the concept of a literary thirdspace, the other space would indeed be a reality but, more importantly, it would be a spatial reality created and opened up by the child protagonist; thus, the question to be asked concerns the origin of these countless worlds. The answer comes in *The Golden Compass*, when Lord Asriel responds to a question from Lyra about the other universe he wants to travel to, the world that can be seen through the Aurora Borealis: “Now that world, and every other universe, came about as a result of possibility” (330).

To explain this, he gives a very detailed example of what happens for worlds to come into being:

“Take the example of tossing a coin: it can come down heads or tails, and we don’t know before it lands which way it’s going to fall. If it comes down heads, that means that the possibility of its coming down tails has collapsed. Until that moment the two possibilities were equal.”

“But on another world, it does come down tails. And when that happens, the two worlds split apart. I’m using the example of tossing a coin to make it clearer.” (330)

Lord Asriel’s example is then put into the more concrete terms of physics:

“In fact, these possibility collapses happen at the level of elementary particles, but they happen in just the same way: one moment several things are possible, the next moment only one happens, and the rest don’t exist. Except that other worlds have sprung into being, on which they *did* happen.” (330–1)

New worlds, it seems, emerge from the splitting of existing worlds on the basis of something akin to chance. In other words, it is a random action that follows a principle of theoretical physics and is not in any way the result of a creative act of world-building; all worlds, here, are ontologically real, a plethora of consensus realities, each of which is, technically, autonomous and unconnected to any other. However, that autonomy has already been compromised, and connections do exist.

The narrative has already revealed the fact that the witches know that Lyra has “a great destiny that can only be fulfilled elsewhere—not in this world, but far beyond” (*Golden* 154), so Lyra must, therefore, travel between worlds even though she will not be able to create portals for herself. At the same time, others are also keen to reach other worlds, most notably Lord Asriel. His means of crossing into other worlds is with machinery and wires and by using the power of the aurora borealis and, significantly, the death of a child (Lyra’s friend, Roger). What Lord Asriel cannot make use of, despite his zeal to cross into other

worlds, are the already existing “invisible places in the air [...]. Gateways into other worlds that angels can see but that others are unaware of” (*Subtle* 126), and these would appear to be the openings that have been created over time.

In fact, the history of these openings is already known by some. As Lord Boreal tells Mrs. Coulter, one of the worlds, Cittàgazze, is “one of millions. There are openings between them, but they’re not easily found” (*Subtle* 175). Will’s first encounter with one of these openings into a different world gives an idea as to their nature:

It looked as if someone had cut a patch out of the air, about two yards from the edge of the road, a patch roughly square in shape and less than a yard across. If you were level with the patch so that it was edge-on, it was nearly invisible, and it was completely invisible from behind. (*Subtle* 13)

As with many openings or portals into other worlds in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, these openings are not meant to be seen by everyone. Here, however, in contrast to the more typical nature of portals—where only certain individuals (and usually only children) can go through—these ways through are available to anyone, human or animal, that happens to chance upon them.

In the long ago past of the multiverse, it appears that there had been no openings between worlds; those that exist now had been created. Even so, there had been some kind of control over their use for, as Lord Boreal explains, “[p]reviously, all the doorways opened into one world, which was a sort of crossroads. That is the world of Cittàgazze” (*Subtle* 176). The scientists from the world of Cittàgazze had been opening portals between worlds for three hundred years using the Subtle knife, which, despite its incredible power, is an unremarkable looking object, “not a special-looking knife, just a dull blade about eight inches long” (*Subtle* 151), but it is the very knife that Lord Asriel needs to

fulfil his plan, and without which he will be defeated. As Lord Boreal further reveals, the original openings are now no longer the sole means of travel between worlds because the actions of Lord Asriel have opened up the barriers that had previously existed between worlds, so that “[i]t seems we can now pass directly from this world into our own, and probably into many others too” (*Subtle* 175).

Certainly, such a state of affairs allows for free movement for all characters, and this situation is broadened yet further when Will acquires the Subtle Knife and learns how to make openings between worlds. However, the movement is not perhaps as free as it seems for the child protagonists. It is clear that making an opening is a stab in the dark; there is no guarantee of what other world is available once the opening is made until Will masters the technique and begins to understand the power that the Subtle Knife has and how to use it in a more controlled way.

At the same time, Lyra’s movement is not something she has direct control over. In general, she travels to other spaces when she accompanies Will, and her unaccompanied movement between worlds occurs when she crosses from her own world into Cittàgazze, after passing through the opening in the sky in the north of her world that Lord Asriel had created. It is there that she first meets Will, who has also crossed through an opening that he had chanced across while trying to evade the police in his own world. However, although Will can make openings once he obtains the Subtle Knife, the holes he cuts do not lead to worlds that he constructs or even takes ownership of; the entrances he creates are into existing worlds.

That these spaces are very much not those of the child protagonists is indicated by Lyra’s reaction when she travels with Will into his Oxford from

Cittàgazze. As Sarah Cantrell notes, “[t]he space of Will’s Oxford is an uncomfortable reminder of her dependence and the limits of her own knowledge” (313). This Oxford, despite there being a certain sense of familiarity, is “disconcertingly different” (*Subtle* 66) for Lyra, and it is a place almost beyond her understanding:

[W]hy had they painted those yellow lines on the road? What where those little white patches dotting every sidewalk? (In her own world, they had never heard of chewing gum.) What could those red and green lights mean at the corner of the road? It was all much harder to read than the alethiometer. (*Subtle* 66)

As such, rather than Lyra unhesitatingly adopting the new space, she is “bereft of a navigational code” (Cantrell 313). In this instance, then, it is clear that, unlike the agentive actions of other child protagonists, when Lyra is in Will’s Oxford she is, as the narrator says, no more than “a lost little girl in a strange world, belonging nowhere” (*Subtle* 62), which reinforces the lack of spatial control that she has.

In fact, the only real degree of spatial control that is seen in the series is through the action of closing down spaces rather than opening them, when Will is tasked with undoing the work of the scientists from Cittàgazze and finding and securing all of the openings between worlds that had already been made. On this element of the plot, Karen Smith suggests that the trilogy

uses conventional means for entry into new worlds but goes beyond the fact of entry by posing the questions: What are the consequences of creating portals? And what can (and should) be done about portals once they have been created? (“Tradition” 143)

Clearly, the consequences are dire (the open portals are not only a means for travel between worlds, but they are the way that the worlds are leaking Dust—the conscious and invisible particles whose disappearance would bring about the destruction of all worlds), and the required action is also plain to see; all the



openings must be closed, an absolute restriction of the spatial that is presented as a necessity.

However, on the matter of deciding whether to close the openings or not, the narrative does also suggest that the choice is one that Will can make or not as he wishes. Witness, for example, Will's understanding of this when he says to his father, "I can't choose my nature, but I can choose what I do. And I *will* choose because now I'm free" (*Amber* 373). This claim to independence on Will's part is echoed later when Will, realising the task ahead of him to close all the openings between worlds, avers, "*I shall decide what to do [...]. Whatever I do, I will choose it, no one else*" (*Amber* 444). Will may indeed make the final decision regarding closing the openings to worlds, but his claim to agency is undermined because his decision-making process has already been tampered with when Will's father explains the spatial situation to him:

"We can travel, if there are openings into other worlds, but we can only live in our own. [...] we have to build the Republic of Heaven where we are, because for us there is nowhere else." (*Amber* 325)

Here, the adult voice tells the child that the option for movement into other spaces is, and must be, contained and closed down. The nature of that "nowhere else" is clearly seen when, near the end of trilogy, Will and others must return to their own worlds:

While they had been speaking, the window had been open beside them. The lights were glowing in the factory, the work was going on; machines were turning, chemicals were combining, people were producing goods and earning their livings. That was the world where Will belonged. (*Amber* 443)

It is significant again that the narrative voice dictates that it is in the 'real' world that Will actually "belonged," and it is also pertinent to note that this is the world of work, of the concrete and mechanical: the rational, the accepted real.

Lyra, too, has learned the virtue of being in place rather than space for, echoing the words of Will's father, she tells her *dæmon*, Pantalaimon,

“where we are is always the most important place [...]. We have to be all those difficult things like cheerful and kind and curious and patient, and we've got to study and think and work hard, all of us, in all our different worlds, and then we'll build [...] The Republic of Heaven,” said Lyra. (*Amber* 464–5).

And this is exactly the point the narrative has sought to make throughout: “where we are is always the most important place,” everyone tied to their own consensus reality where they will only study, think, and work. Lyra will return to Jordan College, no longer able to play, and she will start at a proper school, St. Sophia's (where she will learn by studying books how to understand the alethiometer, or truth measurer, which she had previously understood with her intuition and imagination).

A part of this being tied to consensus reality is the understanding of the ultimately closed spatial order of the cosmology of *His Dark Materials*:

when all the openings were closed, then the worlds would all be restored to their proper relations with one another, and Lyra's Oxford and Will's would lie over each other again, like transparent images on two sheets of film being moved closer and closer until they merged—although they would never truly touch. (*Amber* 451)<sup>63</sup>

Only by closing contact with other worlds will “proper relations” be restored, which means that, having been granted access to a host of other spaces, Will and Lyra quite simply must rid themselves of any desire to travel between spaces (the only way they can be together) because to be out of their own worlds is to die. As Gooderham comments, “[t]he two young people thus embark on conventionally responsible and useful careers in their respective worlds” (172), where Will and Lyra will accept a life lived only in their own worlds, cut off from other spaces (and each other), a life of hard work and discipline; “[b]eing an adult entails

accepting the narrowing of one's potential possible 'shapes,' learning to live with a diminishment of protean possibilities" (Lenz 140).

To reinforce this separation in the cruellest of ways, perhaps, for the child protagonists, it emerges that the different worlds are not, in fact, totally separated and unreachable at all, even after Will has closed all but the opening between the Land of the Dead and the world of the Mulefa in order for the elementary particles of the dead to become Dust again and replenish what has been lost from worlds. When Lyra asks the angel, Xaphania, if the fact that Will must close all the openings between the different worlds means that, from then on, angels will also be "confined to one world as we are" (*Amber* 443), the answer is intriguing. Xaphania—who has also learned from Will the technique of closing openings to other worlds in order to assist with the task—tells Lyra and Will that angels do not need windows to access other worlds because they use another way to travel through space:

"It uses the faculty of what you call imagination. But that does not mean making things up. It is a form of seeing."

"Not *real* traveling, then," said Lyra. "Just pretend . . ."

"No," said Xaphania, "nothing like pretend. Pretending is easy. This way is hard, but much truer." (443).

It is only at this point, in the entirety of the trilogy, that an understanding of the constructive faculty of thirdspace as a "form of seeing" comes close to being touched upon.

Two things emerge from this consideration of the potential of thirdspace space-making. First, it is not everyone (and certainly not child protagonists) but only angels that have this ability (and so it will not, apparently, be available to anyone else) and, second, the imaginative ability to achieve this movement, even were someone not an angel to try, "takes long practice," says Xaphania, and

“[y]ou have to work” (443). That childhood will be long past before the effort required to achieve this faculty bears fruit is no chance implication; such an ability is not for the young. In effect, the act of opening up spaces is largely the province of adult characters, for even Will, with the marvellous knife, is using a tool created by adults for adult ends and ultimately his task is to undo and deny access to spaces (however noble that purpose is since this safely re-establishes the flow of Dust in the different worlds).

The narrative obliquely and in various ways arrives, therefore, as a restatement of the Protestant work ethic, albeit it within a humanist rather than a religious framework, in a moment that resonates with the Victorian requirements placed upon Griselda in *The Cuckoo Clock*. Perhaps, therefore, it is not insignificant that Lyra’s world is described in ways that give it the feel of an older England. Moreover, in an inversion of the very same paradigms that the characters have struggled to undermine—that independent thinking and agency (through free will if not through space-making) is an act of disobedience against authority—His Dark Materials is ultimately premised upon an abandonment of notions of accessing other worlds, an essential forbidding of the possibility of such things. Thus, although Naomi Wood argues that Pullman “advocates repeatedly the disobedient pursuit of knowledge as the key to maturity” (239), the implicit concerns in the narrative work within much the same binary that the church in Lyra’s world had preached (although now it offers a somewhat distorted version); that there is just one consensus reality of importance to individuals, that this consensus reality is where individuals should be happy to be and remain, and that other worlds should remain a spiritual (for which one should read unreachable) counterpart.

As with *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *His Dark Materials* sets up a paradox; it looks to the opening up of worlds and, at the same time, argues for closing them down again and denying access. As with the Narnia books (and in line with events in *The Cuckoo Clock*), the apparently complex world-building here operates ultimately to contain and constrict. Susan Matthews notes of the ending to the trilogy that it “sounds like the end of an essay—it is the end of an argument that is controlled by a single voice” (134). Ultimately, therefore, as Wood remarks, Pullman, as with C. S. Lewis “uses his view of cosmic order to persuade readers that obedience should be understood as central to coming of age” (Wood 238). Thus, as Wood summarises it, the trilogy’s message is that “[t]he imagination allows an expansive apprehension of the complexity and wonder of worlds—and possible worlds—but finally, our true work is to build ‘the Republic of Heaven’ independently of Telos” (255); the science of multiple worlds is both inviting and restricting, and it is most certainly not something that children (nor, indeed, adults it seems) should be investigating, for they should really stay at home in the safe and certain knowledge that consensus reality is all that people should concern themselves with.

### *Closing Doors in Neil Gaiman’s Coraline*

In the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the understanding that ‘home’ is the best place to be, and the idea that one must accept where one is as the only place to inhabit is quite diffusely presented within the scope of a wide narrative involving epic events and a multitude of different worlds, locations and characters. However, this same message can also be seen, and more explicitly, in narratives that work within much less expansive spatial environments. One such example is Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*, the story of a young girl, Coraline, who

enters another world that, this time, is of much smaller proportions—another domestic space—that she must negotiate and escape from. In *Coraline*, Gaiman mixes gothic, fantasy and fairy-tale motifs in order to demonstrate that there really is no place like home.

At the start of the story, Coraline Jones and her parents have recently moved into a new home: “It was a very old house—it had an attic under the roof and a cellar under the ground and an overgrown garden with huge trees in it” (11). The house has been subdivided into four flats (already referencing, in a way, the less spatially expansive nature of modern domestic dwelling). Two of the other flats are occupied, one by an eccentric old man who trains mice, the other by two elderly retired actresses. One flat remains empty. Both of Coraline’s parents work from home, but they always seem to be too busy to spend enough time with Coraline. Coraline is bored, which does not suit her temperament at all; she is an explorer.

Indeed, throughout most of the novel, this aspect of Coraline’s nature is reiterated. It seems that Coraline is most happy when she is being an explorer.

Sometimes Coraline would forget who she was while she was daydreaming that she was exploring the Arctic, or the Amazon rain forest, or Darkest Africa, and it was not until someone tapped her on the shoulder or said her name that Coraline would come back from a million miles away with a start, and all in a fraction of a second have to remember who she was, and what her name was, and that she was even there at all. (81)

However, Coraline’s exploring extends far beyond simple reverie, for she is also an explorer of the places around her, and “[t]he day after they moved in, Coraline went exploring” (13). In fact, “[t]hat was how Coraline spent her first two weeks at the house—exploring the garden and the grounds” (14) and, with this energy to explore, “go out she did, exploring, every day until the day it rained, when

Coraline had to stay inside” (14). Confined indoors by the inclement weather, Coraline’s exploring nature will eventually lead her into another world and danger, and yet Coraline appears to relish such situations. Early in the story, she learns that, in addition to the overgrown plants and a dilapidated tennis court, there was something else in the garden: a well. The two old ladies from the upstairs flat

made a point of telling Coraline how dangerous the well was, and they warned her to be sure she kept away from it. So Coraline set off to explore for it, so that she knew where it was, to keep away from it properly. (13)

Coraline takes three days to do it, but eventually she finds the well; rather than staying away, she deliberately goes to look for it.

Unable to go out on a rainy day, a bored Coraline seeks ways to amuse herself and explores the house at the suggestion of her father. It is on this mission to count things in the house that Coraline discovers something that piques her explorer curiosity: “Of the doors that she found, thirteen opened and closed. The other—the big, carved, brown wooden door at the far corner of the drawing room—was locked” (17). The drawing room, it should be noted, is a room that is not generally available to Coraline, for she “wasn’t allowed in there. Nobody went in there. It was only for best” (16). This room, then, is already a space that Coraline is forbidden to enter and use, but the lure of the locked door and what might be behind it arouses her desire to move into other spaces beyond the confines of the flat:

She said to her mother, “Where does that door go?”  
 “Nowhere, dear.”  
 “It has to go somewhere.” (17)

This response gives an indication of Coraline’s spatial awareness, for how could a door simply go nowhere? On this occasion, however, Coraline’s hope that she

will discover more places to explore is dashed when her mother unlocks the door:

The door swung open.  
Her mother was right. The door didn't go anywhere. It opened onto a brick wall. (18)

However, the lure of the door and what might be behind it is not totally removed and, as with the desire to locate the dangerous well, Coraline's interest in the door is heightened when the old man who lives upstairs brings her a message from his mice: "*Don't go through the door*" (25). For someone like Coraline, this is an incitement to do exactly the opposite.

The first time Coraline is drawn to return to the door, she finds only bricks behind it again. However, when her parents do not come home, and Coraline is alone in the house, she takes the key, returns to the door, and decides to open it. At this point, the narratorial voice remarks that "[s]he knew she was doing something wrong" (37), but the narrative is not clear as to whether Coraline feels guilty at being a naughty child, or whether she is responding to the confinement and wishing to take some measure of ownership of her spatial environment as she had done with the well in the garden. Thus, "Coraline's first entrance into the other house is of a piece with her imagined identity as an explorer, but it is also a characteristic act of defiance against adult prohibitions" (Gooding 397).

This time when she opens the door, "[t]he bricks has gone as if they had never been there" (37). Instead, there is a dark corridor. At this point in the narrative, there is almost a sense that this other space has been opened by Coraline herself. Indeed, When Coraline goes through the door from her 'real'



home and into the other place, she realises that “[t]here was something very familiar about it” (37). Indeed,

(t)he carpet beneath her feet was the same carpet they had in their flat. The wallpaper was the same wallpaper they had. The picture hanging in the hall was the same that they had hanging in their hallway at home.  
She knew where she was: she was in her own home. She hadn’t left. (37).

Of course, once Coraline looks more closely, she can see that things are not exactly the same, but the approximation is so close, at least at this point, as to almost deny any differences at all. It is almost as if it has been constructed as a thirdspace from Coraline’s own real and imaginary. Coraline finds the ‘other’ home quite interesting and appealing at first, for there is delicious food and there are toys that seem alive for her to play with: “*This is more like it*, thought Coraline” (41). It does not take her long to realise, however, that things are not quite as they seem. Most notably, for Coraline to stay in this place, she must truly become part of the ‘other’ family by having her eyes replaced by sewn on buttons.

To escape from this situation, Coraline goes outside, into an ‘other’ garden much like her own where she meets a black cat that can, it seems, travel freely between both worlds. As she walks with the cat she sees that, unlike in her own world, this ‘other’ world’s garden lacks substance and seems incomplete; it was “a pale nothingness, like a blank sheet of paper or an enormous, empty white room. It had no temperature, no smell, no texture, and no taste” (87). It soon becomes clear that this is no thirdspace of Coraline’s construction at all, and the space of the ‘other’ house and its gardens has been created, and is controlled, by the ‘other’ mother. Inside the other house, again with nothing to do, Coraline asks the ‘other’ father what she should do, but he does not answer her at first:

“If you won’t even talk to me,” said Coraline, “I am going exploring.”

“No point,” said the other father. “There isn’t anywhere but here. This is all she made: the house, the grounds, and the people in the house. She made it and she waited.” (85).

One of the promises made to tempt Coraline to stay in the ‘other’ house is that “Your other mother will build whole worlds for you to explore, and tear them down every night when you are done” (138). Clearly, worlds can be made, but it is the adult figure who is seen to be the one who should construct them.

Had Coraline constructed the space she finds herself in, it would have been more real and substantial, but the elements of the spatial, here, lack concreteness, especially outside the house itself:

Where Coraline came from, once you were through the patch of trees, you saw nothing but the meadow and the old tennis court. In this place, the woods went on farther, the trees becoming cruder and less treelike the farther you went.

Pretty soon they seemed very approximate, like the idea of trees: a grayish-brown trunk below, a greenish splotch of something that might have been leaves above.

Coraline wondered if the other mother wasn’t interested in trees, or if she just hadn’t bothered with this bit properly because nobody was expected to come out this far. (86-7)

As Coraline learns, this is not a place that is worth exploring:

“Nothing to find here,” said the cat. “This is just the outside, the part of the place *she* hasn’t bothered to create.” (88)

Indeed, for Coraline, there seems little purpose in trying to explore the gardens outside because

they didn’t exist; they weren’t real. There was no abandoned tennis court in the other mother’s world, no bottomless well. All that was real was the house itself. (110)

In addition, when Coraline walks further to explore and thinks she has been walking away from the ‘other’ house, she finds she has gone in a circle.

“But how can you walk away from something and still come back to it?”

“Easy,” said the cat. “Think of somebody walking around the world. You start out walking away from something and end up coming back to it.”

“Small world,” said Coraline. (89)

This “small world” is less interesting to Coraline. It is not fully imagined, and the only space that has defined properties is the house itself which, despite certain appealing qualities, has its own reasons for being undesirable as a permanent dwelling for Coraline. That this ‘other’ space is not of Coraline’s making is, perhaps one more reason for her not to stay in the ‘other’ house.

However, she cannot simply return to her own home and leave this space behind. As Coraline discovers, not only is the ‘other’ house a place of confinement for three ghost children, earlier victims of the ‘other’ mother who are now trapped, in a “dim space behind the mirror” (95), a place where Coraline also spends some time confined, but her parents are also trapped in the ‘other’ house too. It quickly becomes apparent to Coraline that if she stays in the ‘other’ house, it will be at the expense of her freedom of movement. Staying there will mean she will be trapped in the ‘other’ mother’s world. Thus, despite her desire to leave, she knows she must return to outwit the ‘other’ mother and rescue the trapped souls along with her parents. Although Coraline realises that, in allowing her to effect a rescue, the ‘other’ mother is playing a game with her, when asked by the ‘other’ mother what kind of game she would like to play in order to try to secure the safe return of those trapped, Coraline has no hesitation in deciding what kind of game should be played: “An exploring game,” suggested Coraline. “A finding-things game” (108). Coraline takes up the challenge because she has a belief in her own strengths as an explorer of spaces.

As Coraline increasingly succeeds in her rescue attempt, much to the ‘other’ mother’s frustration, the nature of the ‘other’ house changes accordingly,

for Coraline is effectively destroying the ‘other’ mother’s creative hold over the space. Slowly, the ‘other’ house—which before had been so fully realised—starts to lose its coherence:

Outside, the world had become a formless, swirling mist with no shapes or shadows behind it, while the house itself seemed to have twisted and stretched. It seemed to Coraline that it was crouching, and staring down at her, as if it were not really a house but only the idea of a house. (122)

Gradually, as Coraline observes,

the house itself was continuing to change, becoming less distinct and flattening out, even as she raced down the stairs. It reminded her of a photograph of a house, now, not the thing itself. (141)

With more success for Coraline, the house increasingly has less substance and becomes more indistinct:

The house had flattened out even more. It no longer looked like a photograph—more like a drawing, a crude, charcoal scribble of a house drawn on gray paper. (144)

Finally, Coraline decides that one thing is clear:

The other mother could not create. She could only transform, and twist, and change (144).

This may be Coraline’s assumption, but it contradicts what the other father had told her earlier, and this sets up a contradiction. What exactly is the ‘other’ mother’s ability?

In ascribing to the ‘other’ mother only the role of second-hand creator (or even simply transformer), her power is diminished in that she lacks the capacity to create a thirdspace that can be fully experienced by others. However, if the ‘other’ mother is seen as a creator, as the ‘other’ father states, then there is a notable association of evil with the creative faculty she exhibits in constructing the ‘other’ house. In this latter assumption, therefore, the whole notion of space-making can be seen as corrupted and corrupting, something that the ‘good’ child

protagonist (who is shown not to be capable of such world-building) must destroy. How young readers might perceive this is difficult to judge.

*Coraline* ends, in the traditional manner, with Coraline safely at home and, as Gooding notes, in doing this the novel largely follows the traditional home-away-home pattern. However, as Gooding also adds, “Gaiman’s final technical innovations to the pattern, which entail the infection of the “real” world [...] by the psychic forces at play in the other house, are tacit recognitions of Coraline’s continued developmental struggles” (Gooding 404).<sup>64</sup> This reading might smack of the psychoanalytical, but it does point to the fact that it is not just a case of Coraline curbing her exploring ways; she must also be accepting of the home space as it exists, not as she would wish it to be. To this end, “[t]races of infection by the fantasy world remain” (Gooding 403)—in the form of the other mother’s severed hand—until Coraline traps it in the well in the garden. It is this same well that Coraline’s exploring ways had been drawn to at the start of the novel, signified by her uncovering the well and opening it up; now, Coraline covers it over again in a final act of renunciation of other-worldly inclinations.

Ultimately, Coraline’s discovery of, and entry into, the world of the ‘other’ mother result from her sense of confinement and being spatially curious and bored. However, although she is only able to escape the ‘other’ house by using the very quality, her exploring nature, the very thing that had pushed her to go into it, Coraline is shown that such exploring is not a good thing. The message, here, is little different from that offered in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. In that series, the two child protagonists learn a painful lesson and in *Coraline*, Coraline also finds a lesson is learned. In effect, her fingers have been burned, and she will not be doing that again for, in an artful depiction of

“stranger danger,” Coraline is shown that her “exploring” nature is an unwarranted characteristic, and that she should hold a more mature recognition of the benefits of the home space, whether it satisfies her spatial needs or not.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

In the novels I have discussed in this chapter, an underlying understanding throughout is the notion of confinement and lack of spatial mobility. In numerous instances, child protagonists are first seen in positions of confinement in the ‘home’ (and, often, not even in their own homes); confinement, or being confining, is a common theme in fantasy other world narratives. Confinement can simply mean being unable to leave the house on a rainy day, as in the case of Coraline and with the Pevensie children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, who are forced to stay indoors in a large house they cannot roam about in, and where they have only one room, that the Professor “had set apart for them—a long, low room with two windows looking out in one direction and two in another” (13), to play in; the old adage that children should be seen and not heard (by adults) is confining in spirit if not in actuality. Confinement can also mean real incarceration for various reasons as happens to Lyra throughout most of the His Dark Materials trilogy, and to Coraline when she is put in the space behind the mirror.

However, confinement can be overcome (as will be seen in the novels I discuss in the next chapter), and the other understanding that emerges more clearly from these novels is that home is the best place to be, even though the home space itself is a confining space. Ann Alston suggest that, “[b]y placing the home at the beginning of the narrative it is shown to be integral to the text; it is the foundation of the story regardless of whether it is a good or bad home”

(*Family 75*). Certainly, where narratives seek to portray the idea that there is no place like home, even if one does wander into incredible other spaces, it's initial positioning in the text at the outset does almost guarantee its superiority over other spaces even though, in most cases, it is a "non-place," a term I take from Marc Augé denoting "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (77–8), by which is meant that it does not usually function as the prime location of significant action or interaction for protagonists. Augé's non-places include highways, airport departure lounges, supermarkets and shopping malls, and 'non-place' designates "two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces" (94). Here, the house or home also seems to function as a place related to an end, rather than as a locus of activity (spatial or otherwise) or identity.

Unfortunately, however, the return home, as Nikolajeva notes of the romantic pattern in children's literature, is "to the initial order, the disempowerment of the hero, and the reestablishment of adult authority," where the child protagonist "is brought back to the ordinary, sometimes being explicitly stripped of the attributes of previous power" ("Harry Potter" 128). By taking this notion to its logical conclusion, the confining nature of home spaces (whether they be good or bad) effectively removes from the child protagonists any real sense of constructive spatial agency in consensus reality. As a corollary, it also effectively disempowers the child while 'away' (through the inherent lack of permanence and control of the spatial).

That having been said, it is clear that "home" can be viewed as a space the boundaries of which can be controlled and restricted, and that "[t]he spaces

within houses in children's literature adhere to an 'all-seeing' order that re-confirms adult control" (Alston, "Your" 19). For child protagonists, therefore, the regulated home place does seem to deny opportunities, and specifically even opportunities for movement to different rooms, areas or even thirdspaces, and this is largely seen to be a good thing in the novels I have discussed here.

Thus, although as Manlove suggests, "adult constructs of children and childhood themselves have changed over the past century and a half" (*Alice* 9), this is not always represented textually as a linear progression. In a spatial sense, Stuart Aitken's observation that the nineteenth century view of children as "an exclusive category of existence," one that "resulted in the creation of spaces that are designed to regulate behaviour and offer the interpretations, prohibitions and examples of adults" (145) can be seen to have entrenched itself in the twentieth century and beyond if not in reality, then in the literature produced for young readers.

It is important, however, to consider the potential irony of a situation where, although the author takes control of the spatiality presented, and thereby restricts how child protagonists operate within it, this does not obviate the fact that it presents the possibility of thirdspace as potentially there, even if it is restricted and controlled or even denied. Cantrell, for example, believes that Pullman's use of multiple worlds helps to "encourage readers to confront their own notions of space in the world outside his narrative" (303). Whilst this might not be the message of the novels themselves, this does point to the existence of an implicit potential even though it is not realised in quite the same way as the texts I discuss in the next chapter, texts that operate more dynamically in terms of spatial activity.



### Chapter Three: Being There

In the previous chapter, I considered texts that, despite differences in their dates of publication, in their narrative development, and in the nature of the worlds and spaces that they presented, can all be seen as confining and spatially restrictive in their own individual ways. In those texts, the ultimate return ‘home’ can be seen as a termination, the story’s satisfactory resolution, with space closed down and, ultimately, with child protagonists largely seen as bound and spatially restricted, their function fulfilled—literary child labour in a sense—and no longer given or permitted access to other spatial opportunities. However, this is not necessarily the case with all texts for, as I have already noted, different texts will exhibit different degrees of spatial openness for protagonists.

In this chapter, therefore, I turn to the *how* and *why* of a number of fantasy ‘other world’ texts that can be considered as more spatially active and that are representative of the process of constructing a thirdspace through the spatial agency of the protagonists.

I start with Nesbit’s *The Magic City* as a somewhat rare example of a Nesbit text that has a child protagonist constructing his own world, and thus presenting an early instance of space-making that, in terms of publication dates, is not so far removed in time from Mrs. Molesworth’s *The Cuckoo Clock*. I will then move on to Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* in order to consider how notions of a literary thirdspace are disconnected from strictly psychoanalytical readings of inner space and to show how a spatial reading can offer different insights and interpretations. This will be further elaborated upon in a discussion of William Mayne’s *A Game of Dark* (1971), a text for older readers

and itself long thought of in psychoanalytical terms, as an additional instance of the construction of a thirdspace directly through the agency of the protagonist.

The chapter will then consider *The Homeward Bounders* (1981), by Diana Wynne Jones, something of a departure in that it provides an example of a protagonist who, unlike the characters in the texts discussed in Chapter Two, manages to take control of movement and the spatial even when it is not originally of the protagonist's making. This novel also brings back into consideration ideas of games and play.

Finally, N. E. Bodes *The Slippery Map* (2007) is also examined as an instance of creative space-making that involves not only a child protagonist who takes on a space created by others, but one who actively creates a space of his own that interlinks with the original space that was created. It also offers the chance to consider how adults can also continue to constructively participate in the maintenance of a thirdspace, and what this implies for the ongoing creation of spaces throughout life rather than confining it to solely the activity of children. Moreover, in the texts I discuss here, I will consider how opening up the spatial can be seen to retain the potential for repeated, future actualisation of spaces by protagonists, rather than being a restricted glimpse into the possible as was the case with the texts considered in the previous chapter.

### ***World-building in Edith Nesbit's The Magic City***

Although Manlove observes that, "where older fantasy dealt in a fairly limited and traditional range of fantastic worlds or beings, the modern type is much more novel and various" (*Modern* 259), this estimation should not be taken to mean that older novels have less potency in terms of their depiction of space-making and, to illustrate this point, I start with a comparatively early text of

creative space-making: Edith Nesbit's *The Magic City*.

In contrast to the Victorian period, the Edwardian era has been viewed as a time of more freedom, entertainment and play. Karen Smith, for instance, marks the period starting from 1900 (and running to the start of the 1950s) as noting a change in fantasy fiction, a “diversionary stage” where child protagonists were often enabled “to pursue unusual activities freely,” and to be “much more enterprising and to be prime movers in their situations” in that they “could both initiate action and also become more responsible participants in their adventures” (*Fabulous* 220). Manlove also notes of this period that, “with few exceptions, fantasy becomes less a place for learning or growing than a sort of prolonged secondary world where the imagination can feel at home” (*Alice* 40), suggesting more open spaces for child protagonists to play in.

This broadening out of the spatial environment was accompanied, as Karen Smith also notes, by “new and more imaginative landscapes often involving frequent changes in settings,” and where “[t]he geography of the fantastic environment became complex” (*Fabulous* 220, 235). These changes seem to provide opportunities for the imagination to be put into play, for protagonists to initiate the action and to be more free in the way they play with spaces. Although, as I showed in the previous chapter, date of publication is no guarantee of a text's spatial openness, the fiction I discuss in this chapter is more dynamic and active spatially, and is thus of a kind where the opportunity for creative spatial play comes closer to the idea of thirdspace than the texts discussed in Chapter Two.

In line with this sense of enlarged freedom and widening of the spatial after the Victorian period, Nesbit's *The Magic City*, seems to exemplify the claim

that, “Nesbit’s books show the child rampaging joyously through time and space unchecked” (Ang 113), although rampaging is perhaps too strong a word. Certainly, the way space is dealt with in *The Magic City* moves away from Nesbit’s more usual practice of having magical events taking place in the real world such as in *Five Children and It* (1902), where the marvellous Psammead appears in consensus reality. Instead, this novel offers a more obvious other world fantasy setting, one that is infused with ideas of created spaces.

Indeed, Nesbit confessed that *The Magic City* grew out of a passion for building her own ‘magic cities’ from household objects (126), and children even wrote to ask her how to build their own magic cities, to which Nesbit responded that “[t]he only magic in the magic city is the magic of imagination, which is, after all, the best magic in the world” (143). Nesbit’s comment underplays the influence of the illusory act of magic in favour of a more real magic that is the constructed result of imaginative acts. Not surprisingly, then, Manlove observes of *The Magic City* that it “enlarges space rather than time” (*Alice* 46), and Nesbit certainly offers a much more child-centred understanding of the potential of a constructed thirdspace.

The protagonist of *The Magic City* is a young boy called Philip, who lives with his much older sister, Helen, the two being orphans. Philip and Helen often amuse themselves together with imaginings of a dream island:

The island was a favourite play. Somewhere in the warm seas where palm trees are, and rainbow-coloured sands, the island was said to be—their own island, beautified by their fancy with everything they liked and wanted, and Philip was never tired of talking about it. (4)

Although this imagining seems like wishful thinking, even escapist, it is important to note Nesbit’s use of the word ‘play’, not games, here, for this is not

an activity with ready-made toys, exemplifying Nesbit's assertion about games and play that

[c]ricket and football, fives and raquets, the games that are played with things out of shops, do not need imagination to help them out. The games without bought accessories should perhaps be termed "plays" than games. (112)

The imagined space that Philip creates with his sister is not a matter of whimsy either:

There were times when he almost believed that the island was real. He was king of the island and Helen was queen, and no one else was to be allowed on it. Only these two. (4)

This imaginative and constructive "play" has a spatial element, suggesting early on in the novel that Philip (and, indeed, his sister) has the potential to construct thirdspaces, spaces that can be experienced as real. However, when Helen marries, the two move to her new husband's house, the Grange, and soon after, Helen and her husband go away on honeymoon, leaving Philip with his new step-sister, Lucy, whom he initially dislikes.

Philip's new domestic environment is something that he finds troubling, being very different from his earlier home life with just his sister. For two whole days he lived at the Grange, "hating it and every one in it" (12) because although he has "immense liberty" at the Grange, it is "of a desolate, empty sort" (11). Indeed, very much like Griselda in *The Cuckoo Clock*, Philip experiences confinement in various subtle ways:

The great house was his to go to and fro in. But he was not allowed to touch anything in it. The garden was his—to wander through, but he must not pluck flowers or fruit. He had no lessons, it is true; but, then, he had no games either. There was a nursery, but he was not imprisoned in it—was not even encouraged to spend his time there. He was sent out for walks, and alone, for the park was large and safe. (11)

There is no space allowed for play, and yet, unlike the old house that Griselda is

sent to, at least the Grange is not completely bereft of the presence of the child, for Philip's step-sister Lucy had been raised there, and there is at least a nursery.

For Philip, although the nursery is not a room that he is encouraged to spend time in, initially it is “the room of all that great house that attracted him most, for it was full of toys of the most fascinating kind. (11). Toys, of course, are a means of access to activity but, as Barthes has noted, they are “essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects” (*Mythologies* 53). The toys, however, are initially off-limits to Philip but, significantly, when he is finally given permission to play with these miniature adult objects, he chooses not to play just with the toys; he takes them out of the nursery (that space which was traditionally used to confine children away from the adult spaces of the house) and goes to the drawing room. There, rather than make use of them as toys in themselves—since to do so would mean, as Barthes would suggest, that Philip “does not invent the world, he uses it” (*Mythologies* 55)—he mixes them with numerous and varied other objects from around the house such as books, bowls, game pieces, and wooden blocks, all in a spatially constructive manner. He first builds one city with the things he finds around him, and then another, and then he connects both cities with a bridge. This example is exactly the kind of creative constructive playing that is redolent of the real and imagined of thirdspace construction, of course, and later developments in the narrative will take this further.

Unfortunately for Philip, these efforts to create a new space of his own earn him a sound scolding and a rap over the knuckles with a stick from the nurse, an adult who is determined that Philip should not construct anything at all. However, determined to take one last look at his construction, Philip creeps

downstairs later, in the middle of the night, to look at it again:

He gazed on it for a moment in ecstasy and then turned to shut the door. As he did so he felt a slight strange giddiness and stood a moment with his hand to his head. He turned and went again towards the city, and when he was close to it he gave a little cry, hastily stifled, for fear some one should hear him and come down and send him to bed. (24–5)

This is the moment of connection of spaces, of transition, where the real and the imagined become a new space entirely.

The movement from one space to the other is almost instantaneous here; there is no visible portal or gateway present through which movement will occur and, importantly, there is also no overt suggestion of any kind of magic being involved:

He stood and gazed about him bewildered and, once more, rather giddy. For the city had, in a quick blink of light, followed by darkness, disappeared. So had the drawing-room. So had the chair that stood close to the table. He could see mountainous shapes raising enormous heights in the distance, and the moonlight shone on the tops of them. But he himself seemed to be in a vast, flat plain. (25)

Now, Philip is in a new space and, instead of trying to return to consensus reality, he ventures on in the new space and makes his way to the city of Polistopolitan, where he also discovers that his step-sister has followed him. Both are taken for trespassers in this new space, and they are imprisoned by Mr Noah, a toy figure now come to life, at the top of a tower and under sentence of death.

Interestingly, it is Lucy, not Philip, who first recognises the true nature of their location in her recognition of the fact that the two of them are actually in the city that Philip had built from various bits and pieces in the drawing room in the Grange:

“Don’t you see? It’s your own city that we’re in, your own city that you built on the tables in the drawing-room? It’s all got big by magic, so that we could get in. Look,” she pointed out of the

window, ‘see that great golden dome, that’s one of the brass finger-bowls, and that white building’s my old model of St. Paul’s. And there’s Buckingham Palace over there, with the carved squirrel on the top, and the chessmen, and the blue and white china pepper-pots; and the building we’re in is the black Japanese cabinet.’” (54)

Lucy’s explanatory resort to “magic” as the cause of the city’s appearance, here, is an inevitable choice given no other way to explain the apparently unexplainable. However, it does not disguise the fact that the constructive process was originally Philip’s, even if he is initially unable to recognise this to be so. It emerges later that the reason Lucy was also able to enter Philip’s thirdspace was, as Mr Noah explains to Phil, because “She built up a corner of your city that the nurse had knocked down” (84) and, here, it is possible to see an example of the joint understanding of a shared spatiality that can operate between children at play when they create spaces for that play from the consensus reality around them and through their own spatial representations.

Eventually, the two children escape from their imprisonment, and Philip finds himself back in the world of consensus reality, just in time to see the nurse destroying the city Philip had built. Philip goes to bed, believing he had simply dreamed about the city and the other space he had been in but, when he awakes, he finds that Lucy had not escaped from the city with him, and the domestic staff at the Grange believe she has been kidnapped by gypsies.

It is at this point that Philip meets Mr Noah again, once more a living, albeit very small, being, who is now present in consensus reality in the drawing room of the Grange. It is from Mr Noah that Philip learns how the space-making necessary to bring worlds into being operates:

“The city you built in this room is pulled down,” said Mr. Noah, “but the city you went to wasn’t in this room. Now I put it to you—how could it be?”



“But it was,” said Philip, “or else how could I have got into it.”  
 “It’s a little difficult, I own,” said Mr. Noah. “But, you see, you built those cities in two worlds. It’s pulled down in this world. But in the other world it’s going on.”(84)

Indeed, it seems that such creative spaces are always available to be moved into since, says Mr Noah, “Everything people make in that world goes on for ever” (84). This notion argues for the created space as being substantive rather than ephemeral, a space where control over access rests in the hands of the creator of the space. It is an idea supported by Mr Noah’s reply when Philip asks how it could be that he could enter the other space and experience the city there: “Because you belong to both worlds. And you built the cities. So they were yours” (84). Unlike the Narnia books, therefore, there is no question in this instance about ownership of the created space; it belongs to the constructive protagonist(s).

Thus, with his understanding of how he can construct spaces of his own, and with Lucy in need of rescue, Philip builds his city again, and finds himself back in his new space. Whilst there for the second time, Philip meets the (human) carpenter, Perrin, who has himself found his way into this other world of Philip’s construction. It is Perrin who elaborates upon Mr Noah’s earlier explanation of how the new space came to be:

“All the cities and things you ever built is in this country. I don’t know how it’s managed, no more’n what you do. But so it is. And as you made ‘em, you’ve the right to come to them—if you can get there. And you have got there.” (105–6)

The constructedness, rather than ethereal, nature of the space is reiterated here, especially when, as a part of his explanation, the carpenter is very clear that the space, and the movement into it, is not premised upon a dream or fantastic imagining:

“We come here,” said the carpenter slowly, “when we’re asleep.”

“Oh!” said Philip, deeply disappointed; “it’s just a dream then?”

“Not it. We come here when we’re too sound asleep to dream. You go through the dreams and come out on the other side where everything’s real. That’s here.” (107)

The dream is, here, operates as a portal into another real, rather than a narrative framework to explain a temporary pretence, and the carpenter continues:

“And when they go to sleep they go slap through their dreams and into the other world, and work and play there, see?” (107)

The other world then is posited as being just as real as that of consensus reality by virtue of it being “not unreal, not a dream, but rather a space that comes into being through the protagonist’s agency, a creative playing that constructs a space and also confers ownership of that space. In addition, the narrative also offers an explanation as to why other people, such as Perrin, can enter the world that belongs to its maker, Philip:

“Well, then, you made the cities, but you made ‘em out of what other folks had made, things like bricks and chessmen and books and candlesticks and dominoes and brass basins and every sort of kind of thing. An’ all the people who helped to make all them things you used to build with, they’re all here too. D’you see? Making’s the thing.” (106)

The making is the thing, making something out of the objects of consensus reality, including items used for games, but now finding new, imaginative uses for them; the constructive process is all important in space-making. That the novel includes crafts people and artisans as symbolic of creative individuals suggests, through their absence, that certain kinds of people—those lacking in the creative faculties—are not likely to either build or enter such spaces (or even want to).

The fact that the space belongs to Philip does not forestall the possibility

of it being a difficult environment, and Philip learns that he has to accomplish seven tasks in order to be the “Deliverer” of the world and return again to consensus reality, as Mr Noah explains:

“No one can go out of this place twice unless he’s a King-Deliverer. You’ve gone out once—without me. Before you can go again you’ve got to do seven noble deeds.” (143–4)

Although this apparent restriction on movement is reminiscent of the way that *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *His Dark Materials* trilogy subordinates child protagonists into the role of saviours of a space or world that is not theirs, here the seven tasks become part of an adventure that belongs to the protagonists rather than delivering the other space from some threat, even if Philip’s role is to become the Deliverer.

Philip and Lucy’s efforts to complete the tasks are dogged, however, by the Pretenderette, an adult figure attempting to thwart the children and dominate the new space. This adversary is none other than Lucy’s nurse, who had been so unpleasant to Philip and who had knocked down his city. However, the nurse had not only been destroying Philip’s city, for she too had found her way into the new city by being a space-maker, albeit inadvertently:

“When I found he’d been at his building again,” she said, pointing a contemptuous thumb at Philip, “I was just going to pull it down, and I knocked down a brick or two with my sleeve, and not thinking what I was doing I built them up again; and then I got a bit giddy and the whole thing seemed to begin to grow—candlesticks and bricks and dominoes and everything, bigger and bigger and bigger, and I looked in.” (324–5)

Thus, the nurse has accidentally entered the space, for she had no prior intention to be a part of the world-building (although it is stated at the end of the novel that she never returns to consensus reality). Although this provides the opportunity for an adult foil in the plot to increase the danger in the created space, it does also

suggest that even those, including adults, who would otherwise deny the creative impulse can be caught up in the energy of space-making, just as Winnicott recognised.

However, the space is still not the nurse's, of course, and when she captures Philip and sets off with him on a Hippogriff, unbeknown to her, it flies them to the "Island-where-you-mayn't-go," where she throws Philip to the ground. Interestingly, when she tries to find a place to land herself, "she saw that every blade of grass was a tiny spear of steel, and every spear was pointed at her" (238), and even what appears to be a pool of water is not what it appears: "She tried to dismount in a little pool, but fortunately for her she noticed in time that what shone in it so silvery was not water but white-hot molten metal. (239). For Philip, "there were no white-hot metal and spears and snares of quicksand, only dewy grass and sweet flowers and trees and safety and delight" (240); the island is his own creation after all.

As Philip explores the island and its wonders, he suddenly realises something:

All these wonders were on the island that he and Helen had invented long ago—the island that she used to draw maps of. "It's our very own island," he said, and a glorious feeling of being at home glowed through him, warm and delightful. "We said no one else might come here! That's why the Pretenderette couldn't land. And why they call it the Island-where-you-mayn't-go." (241)

On the island, Philip finds his sister, Helen, for of course, she had been instrumental in this particular instance of world-making too: "They spent a whole week on the island. It was exactly all that they could wish an island to be; because, of course, they had made it themselves, and of course they knew exactly what they wanted" (249). Here again, the text is explicit in pointing to the

creative playing that constructs a space that is owned by those who build the space.

When Lucy arrives with the Dwellers by the Sea in Noah's new ark, Philip is placed in a quandary; he wants to allow the Dwellers to live on the island in safety, but to do so means giving up his "ownership" of the island and also something more:

Helen laughed. "My boy of boys!" she said. And then she looked sad. "Boy of my heart," she said, "you know it's not only giving up our island. If we give it away I must go. It's the only place that there's a door into and out of my dreams." (250)

Philip finally decides to allow the others to land on the island, at which point Helen disappears, apparently also relinquishing her desire to continue with space-making activities now that she is a married woman.

Philip and Lucy then travel to visit the Dwellers by the Sea, and here again the space is a part of Philip's world-building:

The Dwelling seemed to be a sort of town of rounded buildings more like lime-kilns than anything else, with arched doors leading to dark insides. They were all built of tiny stones, such as lay on the beach. Beyond the huts or houses towered the castle, a vast rough structure with towers and arches and buttresses and bastions and glacis and bridges and a great moat all round it. (191–2)

At first, Lucy is perplexed for, although she too recognises the creative agency of space-making, the dwelling appears to be something she did not herself make:

"But I never built a city like that, did you?" Lucy asked as they drew near.

"No," Philip answered; "at least—do you know, I do believe it's the sand castle Helen and I built last summer at Dymchurch. And those huts are the moulds I made of my pail—with the edges worn off, you know." (192)

This discovery reiterates the earlier point that such spaces need not only be the result of individual activity; groups can also work within the same (or almost the same) perceptions of the thirdspace in a shared understanding of the environment

in which they are all moving and performing.

At the end of the adventure, with their seven deeds completed, Lucy and Philip decide it is time to go home, and they ask Mr Noah how they will achieve this return:

“How shall we get home? All in a hurry, like this?”

“How did you get here?”

“By building a house and getting into it.”

“Then build your own house. Oh, we have models of all the houses you were ever in. The pieces are all numbered. You only have to put them together.”

He led them to a large room behind the hall of Public Amusements and took down from a shelf a stout box labelled ‘The Grange.’ On another box Philip saw ‘Laburnum Cottage.’

Mr. Noah, kneeling on his yellow mat, tumbled the contents of the box out on the floor, and Philip and Lucy set to work to build a house with the exquisitely finished little blocks and stones and beams and windows and chimneys. (329–30)

As if to reiterate the difference between moving into a thirdspace—which occurs by imaginatively using all manner of real objects and adapting them as part of the creative process—and moving back into consensus reality, the means of constructing a way back into the concrete, empirical space is by using precisely modelled parts that require little in the way of imagination in order to put them together correctly. The children construct the model, and they find themselves once again in front of the Grange. However, that space of adventure has not disappeared if ever Philip should choose to visit it again; as the novel makes clear, it is his space, and he may return, should he so choose, whenever he wishes.

Nesbit’s novel thus exhibits a much more open sense of the spatial and the way that child protagonists both construct and operate within the spaces they create for themselves (and, in this case, others too) than the more closed novels I discussed in the previous chapter. That Nesbit has a spatiality sensibility that is

quite different from that of, for example, Mrs Molesworth is testament to an understanding of how space should be more open for child protagonists (and children in the world of consensus reality) as a performative space of play. More than this, however, Nesbit's working through of the 'as if' potential of thirdspace in the way the created space is posited as real and experienced is something that much predates the social theories of space and the multiple world fantasy novels that were to come later.

Indeed, Nesbit is something of a pioneer in this respect. As Julia Briggs argues, Nesbit "invented the children's adventure story more or less single-handed, and then she added further magic ingredients such as wishing rings and time travel" (xi). What Briggs's statement suggests is that such narratives (not just those of Nesbit) are primarily adventures—what I describe as performances of movement through spaces—with the very much additional narrative feature of magical elements. Magic, of course can provide an explanation for such events without deep philosophising or recourse to the scientific, although, at the same time, such world-building is a kind of magic, in a creative sense, by producing something new from the imagination.

Ultimately, however, the real 'magic' that is at work in *The Magic City* is seen to be the constructive ability that protagonists have (when so enabled) to combine the real and the imagined into something that is very new, a new space, one that can be experienced by protagonists 'as if' it were real, a space that can be moved into and out of as a result of the protagonist's performance of space-making because the space is owned by the protagonist as its creator. It is a constructive 'magic' that will be seen in other texts as well.

*Picturing Thirdspace: Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are*

I turn now to examine a text from the 1960s, which may be a world away in time from the Edwardian era of Edith Nesbit, but it is only a short distance in terms of space-making. In this instance, however, I will be discussing not a novel, but a well-known picture book, one that is highly regarded in the canon of children's literature, but one that is not usually considered as being an obviously 'other world' fantasy narrative: Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Apart from the book's particular depiction of the spatial, one reason for choosing it for discussion is that the nature of the picture book format actually helps in understanding the depiction of thirdspace because the limited amount of text available does not add many other layers of description (although this does not detract from all of its levels of meanings) in the same way, perhaps, that a full novel would.<sup>65</sup>

*Where the Wild Things Are* tells the story of a young boy, Max, who oversteps the adult mark of good behaviour because, when playing enthusiastically at home one evening dressed in a wolf costume, he had "made mischief of one kind . . . or another" (n.pag.). As a punishment for his misbehaviour, he is sent to his bedroom by his mother. There, in the confines of his small room, a forest and then a sea suddenly emerge. Unperturbed, Max gets into a small boat and sails until he comes to the land of the Wild Things, where he becomes king of the inhabitants before finally sailing into his own bedroom again, now without its forest of trees and wild inhabitants.

One reason that *Where the Wild Things Are* is not thought of primarily as a fantasy 'other world' text is that a not uncommon response to Sendak's picture book is to view it as a representation of the psychological playing out of a young



boy's rage. Jennifer Shaddock, for example, notes that a standard view of the book is that it shows Max's "successful internal struggle—the struggle that all developing children must experience—to tame his transgressive desires in order to retain his mother's love" (156). Francis Spufford also suggests that the book is "one of the very few picture books to make an entirely deliberate, and beautiful, use of the psychoanalytic story of anger" (60) and, similarly, Kenneth Kidd sees the book as being Sendak's "psychological refashioning of the wild and the civil" (155). At the same time, however, Kidd suggest the possibility of Max "[f]alling asleep" (155) before travelling to the land of the wild things, suggesting that the space of the wild things could also be seen as a fantasised place of escape, a dream world, that lasts only while Max sleeps.

Gooding argues that "the various refinements of the 'portal' narrative pattern render the form a particularly resonant and nuanced mode for representing a child protagonist's psychic development" (404) and, in theory, any such narrative could be subjected to a psychoanalytical approach.<sup>66</sup> Certainly, as is the case for Philip in *The Magic City*, Max does not transition to another space through any obvious portal between worlds, and this might lead to suggestions that the space he (and, therefore, many other protagonists) enters is the product of "psychical or emotional disturbance" (Nikolajeva, "Fairy" 153). However, can this be the only possible option when trying to understand the spatial, especially when the mental configures only a part of the construction of thirdspace as both imagined *and* real?

Moreover, as Nikolajeva quite rightly observes of the psychoanalytical approach, "we should remember that literary characters need not behave according to patterns described in psychology textbooks" ("Beyond" 8). I

pointed out in Chapter One the problem with treating characters as real. Worryingly, perhaps, if protagonists are put on the couch and considered to be in some way psychologically real, and if the psychoanalytical route is taken in order to understand their actions, it would ultimately lead to the conclusion that protagonists who create and experience such a thirdspace are nothing short of delusional or possibly even psychotic. There is an obvious irony, therefore, in arguing for the unrealness of fantasy worlds whilst simultaneously positing the psychological ‘realness’ of characters.

Whilst a psychoanalytical approach can help to illuminate texts from a specific perspective, in this instance, it is also useful to identify *Where the Wild Things Are* as having a narrative form that is, at least in part, as Shaddock suggests, “historically and culturally indebted to the nineteenth-century adventure/explorer narrative,” where there is a “desire for the freedoms of the uncivilized” that is “founded upon the restraints of the domesticated world” (155, 156). Shaddock’s suggestion makes some sense given that the book opens in the space of the home, with young Max clearly rampaging about the house until his mischief making finally sees him sent to his bedroom without his supper. U. C. Knoepfelmacher suggests that the first main illustration where Max, standing on two books, is building a camp, is evidence of Max’s “successful demarcation of a child-space,” whereas the place where the wild things live is a “fantasyland” (171). The make-shift tent that Max builds in this early scene will be seen again, although in much grander form, in his own thirdspace of the land of the wild things, visually suggesting the basis of thirdspace in the real and imagined.

Although the camp might be further indication, perhaps, of the explorer narrative, it is a grim-faced Max that is seen building that more conventional

play-space in what, to an explorer, must be a very confining domestic setting. In these early scenes of the book, therefore, Max is perhaps to be considered as playing games as the little boy in the wolf suit but, in the thirdspace scenes that come later, Max is truly playing in Winnicott's terms. There is, for example, an obvious shift from that earlier grim-faced young boy to a mischievously smiling Max in the fifth illustration, where the forest—his forest, his space—is almost fully open to him. That smiling face is a knowing smile, not one of shock or surprise as the space around him transforms, a knowing smile born of what can be surmised as a full understanding of what is happening to the space of the room.

Here, then, within the apparently confining space of his bedroom, Max takes the opportunity to reconstruct the place he has been restricted to as a punishment, and he recreates it as a different, thirdspace; his room becomes a forest, one that “grew until his ceiling hung with vines and the walls became the world all around” (n.pag.), alongside a sea over which he travels to the land where the Wild Things live. As with Philip's first transition into his thirdspace in *The Magic City*, the moment of connection between the real and imagined requires no portal (and, here, no obvious magic either). It is worth noting from the illustration that, although the bed posts of Max's bed do grow into trees, other trees grow from nothing, suggesting the “simultaneously real-and-imagined and more” that characterises Soja's thirdspace. It is also noteworthy that these trees are already beginning to spread themselves beyond the confines of the borders of the illustration's frame, itself now showing a more expansive view of Max's space than was seen in the first picture of his room. All of this spreading and expansion outwards suggests an added significance to the created spatial rather

than just signifying the interiority of the mind.

Indeed, the development of the illustrations does add to the sense of a created, and therefore less constrictive, space for Max to move within. The early illustrations in the book, where Max is at home, are all confined within the frame of a single page. However, once Max's spatiality starts to open up, the illustrations cover double-page spreads before returning to a final single page illustration when Max returns to just his bedroom again. As Paul Arakelian observes,

[t]he early separation of text and drawing gradually broadens to a full two-page panel in panel 9 when the boy arrives at where the wild things are. The panels shrink again when he leaves in panel 17 to return to his own room. (123)

For Arakelian, this shifting of dimensions to match the spatial emplacement “reinforces the correspondence between the boy's power in the place he creates and his lack of power in his room.” (123). At the same time, the more muted colours of the home space at the start of the story give way to the far more colourful depictions of the space of the wild things:

Early in the story when Max is mischievous and in his room, the colors are dull and the cross-hatching blends various objects together, but later, when Max travels away, yellows, pinks, and deeper blues are used, and a variety of textures emerges. (Arakelian 126)

Whilst these changes in colour in the illustrations may conjure up something reminiscent of a psychedelic experience, this is clearly not a drug-induced trip for a young boy. Arakelian does, however, work from the premise that “from the beginning of Max's adventure, violations of place and time are used to separate Max and the reader from the ‘real’ world and isolate him in dream or fantasy” (125), but such an understanding would tend towards the notion that Max has no control over what is going on.

However, when Max finally arrives at an island and encounters the wild things, he faces them not fearfully, but in control; there is no shock at this strange encounter, no sense of Max experiencing anything Other. The wild things may roar and seem menacing, but an unperturbed young (and much smaller) Max simply says ‘BE STILL’ (n.pag.). This is, after all, Max’s space, for not only has he constructed it from the real and imagined, but he is also, as his mother has said, a ‘WILD THING’ (n.pag.) himself. Indeed, as can be seen in the book’s second illustration, when Max is chasing the family dog down the stairs, a picture of a wild thing, drawn by Max, can be seen on the wall, so it is clear that a wild thing will hold no fears for him since the creatures themselves are a part of his imagination and his creative space-making.

It would be quite possible to see Max as taking a home-away-home route, returning safely to the care of his family and the safety of home at the end of the narrative. Indeed, Nodelman’s discussion of this text’s spatiality maintains a binary understanding of what is happening:

A wildly luxuriant forest may grow in Max’s sparse bedroom, but it’s clearly a separate and opposite thing, and it’s obviously gone by the time the book ends. The magic is not that two apparently opposite things become one larger, more subtle thing, as might happen in an adult story, but rather that two opposite things have intersected for a time, maybe done a dance with each other, but remained finally separate. (“Pleasure” 10)

In this spatial context, then, and contrary to the understanding of thirdspace in the literay context, Nodelman believes that “the oppositions do intersect and interact but never actually and finally blend” (“Pleasure 10). However, Knoepfelmacher, having also characterised the land of the wild things as being wholly unreal, does hint at something more than just the binary in operation when he notes that “[t]he books last illustration returns Max *from* a bedroom he

may never have left” (171, my emphasis). In essence, Max is never really ‘away’ at all; he is simply actualising the virtual and moving within a contingent space of his own making.

Here, as in many children’s other world fantasy novels, the territory and the process of territorialisation of the spatial, can be seen as expression of the subject’s role as the agent in enacting the spatial. That Max has chosen to return to a place where “someone loved him best of all”(n.pag.) (for it is never stated in the text that Max’s mother does not love him) argues for the level of purposeful control Max has over his thirdspace and movement within it. Thus, the departure that is not escape in this text is a spatial imagining that does not take the child protagonist out of a place at all; rather it is one that allows the child protagonist to recreate a space in a form that is appropriate to moment. Max goes and returns, of his own free will, into and out of a space of his own creation.

More than just this level of movement, however, the nature of the spatiality of *Where the Wild Things Are* shows that literary thirdspace can also be seen as a lived phenomenon. Max clearly experiences, at the same time, both being in the space he has created—and emotions and sensations arising from being there—and being at home in his room, and even those few short lines that accompany Sendak’s illustrations make it clear that there is no real differentiation of space from Max’ perspective. Interestingly, the 2009 film adaptation of the book, directed by Spike Jonze, shows Max running out of his house after misbehaving and arguing with his mother, going through a wood, and finally reaching a pond, at the edge of which is a boat. Max then gets into the boat and starts sailing, the pond becomes an ocean, and then Max reaches the island of the wild things. All of this movement is shown as spatially contiguous

within Max's consensus reality; that is, there is no separation of fantasy and real because it is all a spatial real for Max.

Indeed, the putative 'real' and 'unreal' are actually one, something which is most clearly observable when Max eventually finds himself once again moving "into the night of his very own room" (n.pag.). The main reason for Max's return, it seems, is that the smell of food (the supper that awaits him within the 'real' of home) wafts through the totality of a hungry Max's created spatiality permeating the land of the Wild Things: "Then all around from far across the world he smelled good things to eat" (n.pag.). As the text specifically notes, here, the aroma comes from across *the* world; it does not suggest in any way that the smell has crossed from one real world to another, unreal, one.

Arakelian calls the final line of the book "cryptic" (123), and that the supper is "still hot" (n.pag.) does seem to reinforce "reality" and argue for the benefits of home. This is a standard reading, although it does seem to necessitate taking the position that "Max has dreamt his journey to the Wild Things" (A. Chambers 48). However, it still leaves matters open in terms of the extent to which Max has created another "real" since it does still serve to reinforce the experiential nature of Max's real and imagined experience that comes from his having smelled the food. In addition, readers are not privy to the moment when the supper arrives in the consensus reality of Max's bedroom, and all they can know is that it occurs at some point during—and does not interrupt—Max's time in his constructed thirdspace.

Significantly, the final words of the book are on a plain white background divorced from the spatial narrative depicted visually and colourfully earlier. This positioning suggests that, rather than relating directly to performative actions on

the part of Max, “[t]he hot supper awaiting him might be seen as his mother’s acceptance of both his need to go and her obligation to nurture” (Cooper 319). At the same time, the final situation represents an adult need for the stability of home (and therefore an adult construction of childhood), and yet does not wholly diminish the agency of the movement within thirdspace as presented because even confining texts that follow the home-away-home pattern still show ways in which readers can see spaces as being opened up (a point I discuss further in the next chapter). It also goes some way to arguing the Bahktinian point that understandings of time and space need to be considered together and that, as I noted at the end of my Introduction, space needs to be considered alongside other elements of narrative for a richer understanding of texts.

At the end of *Where The Wild Things Are*, the obviously wry look on Max’s face when he moves again within the space of just his bedroom is surely proof enough that he does not return a reformed character; he will continue to be a wild thing. Importantly for the specific reading I have set out here, the return does not mean that the created space ceases to exist in its virtual state—nor that its ‘unreal’ nature is eternally (and pejoratively) set against the real of home—or that the constructive ability to combine the real and imagined is only a singular event for, as Shaddock observes,

while the closing illustration has Max smiling and pushing his wolf hood off his head, Max nonetheless still occupies his wolf suit, the moon shines through his window reminding us of the nightscape he has just visited, and the vibrant green of the plant on Max’s bedside table hints that it may grow and grow again. (158)

In spatial terms, therefore, *Where The Wild Things Are* is not only, or primarily, a text of psychological growth or learning; it is a presentation of a space of playing that gives due consideration not to the fact that children play, but how they play.



As with *The Magic City*, what is most evident here is the ability of a child protagonist to move out of a space—here, a particularly confining one—and into another constructed by the protagonist, a space that operates as experientially real for the protagonist. Whilst the nature of that thirdspace may be limited by both Max’s age and that of the intended readers, other texts can offer a more complex examination of these processes at work, and I now turn to look at a text written for older readers: William Mayne’s *A Game of Dark*.

### ***The Spatial Presence of William Mayne’s A Game of Dark***

Whilst the picture book format of *Where the Wild Things Are* gives a more direct and, at the same time, visual insight into both the play that creates a thirdspace and the performances that are possible within it, novels can often cover over the obvious with textual details, especially when the novel is more intense and complex, as is the case with William Mayne’s *A Game of Dark*. However, as with Sendak’s work, in Mayne’s fiction, there is an overwhelming sense of the author’s affinity with children and childhood and how children think and feel, and of his championing the cause of children against adults. Indeed, Manlove has noted that an overarching understanding throughout Mayne’s novels is “the truth of the vision of young children” (Alice 179).

Mayne has also been described as having an “extraordinary ability to capture the physicality of place intimately perceived from within a child’s sensual understanding” (Watson, *Reading* 113). Whilst Watson may be referring more specifically to the physical landscapes of Mayne’s native Yorkshire, this does not necessarily exclude Mayne’s use of the spatial as a constructed space in fantasy novels, and this is particularly the case with Mayne’s novel for older readers, *A Game of Dark*, where the spatial and that affinity for the child can be

seen to combine.

As with Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, a common critical approach to *A Game of Dark* is to take a psychoanalytic perspective. In many ways, this is a natural inclination for a novel that tells the story of a fifteen year old protagonist, Donald Jackson, who lives with his mother and his sick and crippled father in a thin-walled bungalow, and where escape from the oppressiveness of his father's religious belief and the guilt he is made to feel at his sister's earlier death is seemingly impossible. Certainly Donald's constant shifts between two spaces—a constricting, strict Methodist home life, and an alternative, more primitive and feudal, world that is being ravaged by a devouring worm, where he finds himself called Jackson (his surname, and the name used at school), and where he befriends a girl called Carrica—can be seen as “the darker kind of imagining of a rather dark boy; it is wholly in his mind” (Rees 101). The text does seem to support a psychological explanation of events as the main interpretive possibility; a novel where the protagonist's “movement” into another space and out of the miserable existence he experiences at home can be seen as offering readers “a fantasy of deliberate escapism for a disturbed mind,” where “Donald's need to escape arises from his situation in the primary world” (Swinfen 63). The question is whether such a reading works to fully explicate both what happens in the novel and how it happens.

Diagnosing a “disturbed mind” as the prime cause of the novel's events would also suggest disturbed actions and movements for the protagonist too, but the inner space, psychological approach that sees the novel only as an escapist fantasy, closes down the possibility for alternative readings. It overlooks the constructedness of the space Donald moves within, and it neglects the level of

control and participation in the events of the other space that Donald involves himself with, especially as Donald's "escape" is to a world that is, in many ways, much less appealing than his original world of consensus reality. It is a world of dirt and death, coupled with an awful "stench that rose from the whole of the ground around him" (14). Indeed, Donald's other world is "a much worse place" (7) than is his home, at least in physical terms. By taking a spatial perspective, what emerges in contrast to psychoanalytical notions is that, throughout the novel, Donald is constantly choosing to reposition himself spatially.

In addition, as with Max, whose senses operate in both spaces that he occupies (as can be understood when he smells supper), Donald's 'other' world can also be seen to be a part of his individual and personal experience. At the start of *A Game of Dark* the 'other world' exerts a powerful enough influence over his senses that, even when he 'returns' to consensus reality, it remains with him:

His limbs, and particularly his neck, felt very stiff. In his mouth and nostrils and throat there was a stench, metallic and rotten and piercing, the most foul he had ever known, and that was the worst thing and what made him feel so sick. It made him worse than sick: the stench was not only felt by the ordinary senses of taste and smell but sensed by the whole of his skin, and seemed to weigh in every bone. (8)

From this 'other' world, he experiences a "powerful and terrible smell [...] that filled his throat and made him gag and then bend over and vomit" (13), as he finds himself back in the reality of the staff room at his school. His very real nausea, as a response to the supposed 'other' world, is still present in the 'real' world of consensus reality, and as Donald, sickened by the filth and stench of his 'other' world, begins to recover, he becomes aware of his access to the spatial:

Then he was almost in two places at once, or perhaps in a place from which he could step into either of two worlds. One was a

hillside of bracken and small trees, cold and grey, and the other was that small room called the staff room, heavy with polish and smoke. (13)

Indeed, the world of what should be consensus reality is as likely to be a part of the ‘other’ world for, as Donald steps into that horrible place again, it is twilight there, the morning has passed and, as Jackson, he now “knew that something had interrupted what he was doing” (13), that something being consensus reality: “Then he felt himself vanishing, and the place he was in grew smaller and smaller and retreated from him [...] to be replaced by the dull fold of the staff room” (16).

In fact, the swift movement between worlds in *A Game of Dark* is all the more disturbing because, in an even more immediate sense than in the texts I have discussed so far in this chapter, there is no obvious portal to signal the movement or allow for the passage between spaces. Donald seems to slip relatively easily into the place where he becomes Jackson, and this movement is usually sudden, happening between sentences or even mid-sentence. In the way that these changes happen, the novel seems to work towards the idea that there is no discrete separation of real and unreal, for Donald is never not Donald, but he is also never not Jackson and, at one point, when Donald is Jackson again, he finds that his identity and subject position are an expression of the spatial:

He was being some other person, he found, in a crisp buzzing world of hard light and hard ground and hard people. Then, for a moment again he was Donald walking towards the bridge, and the boy who that morning, perhaps, had called himself Jackson to a girl on a hillside. For a moment he could choose again which he would be. One is real, he said to himself. Donald is real. The other is a game of darkness, and I can be either and step from one to the other as I like. (23–4)

Donald/Jackson is making clear, here, something that is far more implicit in the case of Max’s movement within the land of the Wild Things: the act of

movement is a matter of choice, and it is a part of the protagonist's own spatial construction.

It would be remiss not to note Donald's voicing of his own separation of 'real' and 'unreal' here. However, Donald, as Jackson, also has a substantial past to his other world existence: "He had come from the north. He had crossed a desolate place, and was in a broken town, full of the ruins of abandonment and the misty cold twilight" (21). The substantive history that emerges of the other space gives it an authenticity that goes beyond simple fantasy imaginings or disturbed projections of the mind.

Donald's ability to choose his own space and to be in it is also clearly evidenced when, as Jackson, and while performing his duties as 'boy' to Lord Breakbone, he finds

there came a glimpse of another place, and for a moment he was Donald and Jackson, something different from Donald Jackson as one person, and he was seeing both places, and could again chose which to take. He chose the one with less shame and guilt to it, and found himself again cleaning harnesses in a stable. (52)

Donald's "shame and guilt" are his reaction to his lack of feelings towards his father, coupled with his knowledge of the events surrounding his sister's death and the cause of his father's ill health:

He thought he could see all the people around him and found they were all in the wrong place. He needed a place to see them from so that they were all in the right order. Somewhere, he thought, there is a place that is right for me, there is a way of looking at things and a time when the world will run smoothly again. (122–3)

His movement into his own thirdspace, however, seems to show him the need to establish his own spatiality in order, at the very least, to maintain his own personal perspective.

Towards the end of the novel, as Donald's father slips closer to death, and

as Jackson slays the worm, Donald finds that

[h]e was now in two worlds. One of them was the hillside and the green grass. The other was the house in Hales Hill, and the bed he had slept in and the thin wall he leaned against there, and both were actual, and he could choose which to be in. one was silent, and in the other the dreadful breathing continued. There was movement in the house. Mrs Jackson came through from the kitchen and went into the other room. In the other world, here was movement too, and Carrica came up to him and found him. (125)

Again, Donald's presence is seen to operate across spaces, as it was for Max. Donald's thoughts continue: "Carrica was a phantom if he wanted her to be, and the house in Hales Hill was another, and he had the choice of which to remain with" (126), a thought which argues more clearly that, for Donald, neither space is real, and yet nor is it unreal. Indeed, as Manlove says of the spaces Donald inhabits in the novel, "the one does not exist simply to reflect the other, indeed each is so vivid that it cannot finally be said which of them reflects the other" (*Alice* 118). The division between real and unreal has thus been dissolved in favour of *a* real, one that is constructed and contingent by and for the protagonist, and one that exists and operates at the will of the protagonist.

Ultimately, Donald removes himself from the world of Jackson, moving himself away

from the presence of Carrica, so that there was no more sight of the lord's fields or the town beyond or that golden morning, but only the golden morning at Hales Hill, where reality was" (126).

Importantly, therefore, it is clearly Donald's choice to enter or leave this thirdspace; there is no magical force at work, pulling him into a wonderland of adventure. What is significant, here, is that "he had the choice of which to remain with" (126). Swinfen argues that this element of choice shows that, ultimately, "Donald chooses the primary world of reality and rejects his secondary world" (66), but this argues for two distinct spatial environments, the real and the unreal,

and it also precludes the possibility of any other (particularly spatial) potential at work in the text.

Ironically, too, Swinfen's focus on Donald's active final choice also speaks against the psychological approach precisely because it is specifically Donald's choice as to which world he wishes to inhabit; the decision is lucid and consciously made. Moreover, when Donald chooses Hales Hill, "where reality was" (126), this is not simply a case of Donald choosing 'reality' over the 'unreal' space; the choice is seen to be one of where to locate himself. Donald simply no longer exercises his option of moving between the different spaces, different realities, available to him such that he does not so much choose reality over the unreal (since both are equally real); he merely stops moving between spaces within the narrative frame.

When Lois Kuznets describes *A Game of Dark* as a "psychofantasy" (rather than being a psychological fantasy), she argues that it is a text that is "not a work of fantasy *per se*," but one where the fantasy is simply "a device within the realistic problem novel" (17). Although arriving at it by a different route, I also suggest that *A Game of Dark* (and other texts that exhibit the spatial openness it displays) is not a fantasy because, as with the adventure plus magic formula of Nesbit's work, this novel really functions around an understanding of the spatiality of child protagonists, a created spatiality of the real and imagined that works within the confines of consensus reality's borders and boundaries and makes something more of them.

Donald's movements are not, therefore, into and out of a mentally disturbed or delusional state. Instead, they represent an act of walking through another kind of space that is constructed wholly by and for himself. The novel is,

therefore, another presentation—albeit with complex overtones—of an understanding of the thirdspace that child protagonists can experientially occupy during what is the serious business of playing spatially and of the agency they can exert within their own worlds.

***Spatial Nomadism: Diana Wynne Jones’s The Homeward Bounders***

In the novels I have discussed so far in this chapter, only two world spaces were evident. In contrast, many of the novels of Diana Wynne Jones offer a multiversal perspective, much like in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy. As I noted in chapter two, Manlove considers Wynne Jones’s novels as part of a trend in fantasy writing for the presentation of multiple realities that “subvert any clear, single or fixed view of the universe” (*Alice* 149) and, by positing the multiverse of a myriad other worlds, Wynne Jones does call into question the “consensus” of consensus reality. Manlove also notes that the fantasy of the time was “often more extreme, because reality itself is seen as a series of fantasies,” wherein “our own world is no longer automatically given primary reality, and we may find that it is a fantastic world that is made the objective one, while ours becomes fantastic” (*Alice* 141). However, Manlove’s comments do suggest that the kind of space-making that can be considered as thirdspace became a more obvious narrative element.

In *The Homeward Bounders*, many worlds are already out there, worlds that have a prior existence to the main protagonist’s encounter with them. However, what this novel exemplifies (and how it contrasts with the many worlds of *His Dark Materials*) is how protagonists can take ownership of a spatial that is not theirs. Also providing an obvious contrast with how child protagonists enter spaces in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Homeward Bounders*



shows a transition between the child protagonist as being called or directed into a space, and the child protagonist as enabled to make free movement with a capacity to make his or her own decisions as to that movement between spaces. At the same time, the notion of thirdspace as a space of play, rather than a place for games, is also present in this novel, arising from the narrative's main premise that there exists a vast series of parallel universes, all of which have become a huge board game for a race of sinister, hooded and cloaked beings, only identified as "Them," beings who seem to be playing dice with the multiverse.

The novel's main protagonist, Jamie Hamilton, is a twelve year old boy who stumbles across Them playing their game with human (and non-human) lives across different worlds. Jamie's inadvertent discovery means that he can no longer be considered a part of the game by Them and, as the creatures discuss his fate, Jamie feels "just as if I were a wooden counter or a piece of card in a game" (25). In effect, Jamie is but one of many pawns being moved around the board and, because he has become aware of this fact, he is made into a discard:

"We have no further use for you in play. You are free to walk the bounds as you please, but it will be against the rules for you to enter play in any world. To ensure you keep this rule, you will be transferred to another field of play every time a move ends in the field where you are." (27)

That knowledge of the fact of the game requires an individual to be removed, isolated, already speaks to imposed conventions of using space rather than there being the freedom to determine one's own use of the spatial.

Thus, Jamie is forced to become a Homeward Bounder, which means that he is compelled to wander from world to world as a nomad until he can find his own home again:

The rules also state that you are allowed to return Home if you can. If you succeed in returning Home, then you can enter play in

the normal manner.” (27)

Of course, the catch for Jamie is that, whilst finding his home again will mean that he no longer has to continue wandering through worlds, once he is back in his home world, he will become a part of the game again. Even so, Jamie is determined to go home:

*They* had told me the rules, and those said I could get Home if I could manage it. Well I would. I might be a discard on the Bounder circuits, but I was a Homeward Bounder, and *They* had better not forget it. I was going to get Home and spite *Them*. (29)

It is his search for home that makes Jamie an experienced traveller through worlds and affords him a growing understanding of how the spaces operate:

They are separate universes, stacked in together [...]. These universes all touch somewhere—and where they touch is the boundary—but they don’t mix. Homeward Bounders seem to be the only people who can go from one world to another. And then we go by walking the Bounds until we come to a Boundary, when [...] we get twitched into the Boundary in another Earth, another universe. (35)

At this point, therefore, there seems to be a spatially closed multiverse in operation, with a Boundary operating much like the pools in the Wood Between the Worlds seen in *The Magician’s Nephew*. However, a more detailed understanding of the nature of the spatial will emerge later.

On his journey, Jamie also encounters the legendary ship, the Flying Dutchman, and an old tramp who, it seems is Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew. As the Flying Dutchman explains to Jamie, all their trials and tribulations, their endless wanderings, are “[a]ll for a game. A game!” (53). Ahasuerus, too, had witnessed *Them* playing their game: “I saw the gaming board of *Them* and I saw the game *They* played with the nations. And I went out to preach and warn my people of *Their* coming ploy” (169). It is for this reason that he has been condemned to wander for all eternity. Jamie also meets someone else, an

individual chained to a rock by Them and tortured every day by a vulture pecking at him. This is Prometheus (although he is never named), who explains that he was put there because, as he says, “I discovered about the Bounds, and all the ways of the world, and I made the bad mistake of telling *Them*” (61). This error has resulted not only in his own physical confinement, but also a parallel ‘confinement’ for those like Jamie who are forced to wander ceaselessly; here, such movement is enforced rather than voluntary.

Jamie wanders through the worlds until he meets Helen Haras-Uquara, from the world of Uquar. Helen is also a Homeward Bounder because she, too, had seen Them playing their game: “They had our whole world spread out, on a table, and were moving people about in it, playing a game with us!” (96). Helen and Jamie travel together until they meet Joris, another new Homeward Bounder, and the three of them eventually come to a world in which they meet Adam and Vanessa. Joined by Konstam, Joris’s master, the six attack Them in an effort to end their control, but their failure results in all six of them being made into Homeward Bounders. This act fills the Bounder circuits to their maximum capacity and They cannot create any more Homeward Bounders, for even They must play by Their own rules. Indeed, as Jamie later learns in conversation with the Promethean figure, They are indeed caught in the rules:

“*They* are bound to keep the rules too?”  
 “Yes,” he said. “If you play a game, then you have to keep the rules, or there is no game anymore.” (252)

Similarly, Jamie initially believes that, as a Homeward Bounder, he is also bound by Their rules, and that he has no control over events or his movement between different spaces.

This sense of being controlled and caught up in someone else’s

conventions and game rules is noticeable in the way movement is effected between worlds; there is a “sideways twitch” and, suddenly, Jamie finds himself “somewhere else entirely” (27). The moving on is relentless, too, for as Jamie says, after arriving in a new world, “you’re just getting used to it, when bang! Up starts the dragging and yearning, and you’re on your way again” (67). Indeed, the apparently uncontrollable call of the Bounds that separate worlds is overwhelming and compelling for Homeward Bounders, as Jamie learns:

It was like being pulled, strongly and remorselessly, sideways from the way we were going. With it, came a worse feeling—from inside me. It was a terrible yearning and a longing. My throat hurt with it. And it was like an itch too. I wanted to get inside my head and scratch. Both feelings were so strong that I had to turn my horse the way they pulled me. (32)

Thus far, it seems, Jamie is indeed a pawn, moving at the whim of others, unable to control or direct his own spatiality.

However, Jamie eventually discovers that, rather than simply waiting for the call of the Bounds, it is indeed possible to make a personal decision about whether or not to move between worlds. It is a discovery that opens up new possibilities:

All of a sudden, hope was roaring in my ears. If this was true, I could go anywhere I wanted. I could zip across world after world, [...] and end up at Home. Now. Soon. Today! (131)

In fact, as Jamie finds, “There is not even a twitch if you do it of your own free will. You are just there” (132). This freedom of movement comes at the same time as Joris, Helen and Jamie come to an important realization whilst Jamie is explaining to Joris how the Boundaries work:

I explained to him about the Bounds calling whenever one of *Them* playing the world you were in finished a move, and how you always knew roughly when it was due.

“Yes, I realize,” he said. “That’s how *They* transfer us to stop us entering play. But we can surely go back to the Boundary

now and try for a better world if we want.”

“Can we,” I said. I didn’t think it was possible.

“Why not?” asked Helen. “We don’t have to keep *Their* rules.”

“No—” said Joris. “I meant I don’t think it *is* a rule. *They* didn’t tell me I couldn’t use the Boundaries any time I wanted. *They* said ‘You are free to walk the Bounds’ as if I could. We can use Boundaries any time in my world.” (130–1)

In fact, Jamie had already been given this information much earlier by the Promethean figure chained to the rocks:

“There are no rules,” he said. “Only principles and natural laws. The rules were made by *Them*. They are caught inside *Their* own rules now, but there’s no need for you to be caught too. Stay outside. If you’re lucky, you might catch *Them* up in *Their* own rules.” (63)

Helen, too, echoing the Promethean figure’s words almost exactly (he had already imparted this information to her in her own world) has also told Jamie of this: “‘There are no Rules,’ she said. ‘Only principles and natural laws.’” The conclusion is, therefore, obvious: “It must be *Them* who pretend there are rules” (93). Thus, the external rules are, in fact, arbitrarily imposed and can be broken. It is not necessary, unless one chooses to bind oneself to them, to abide by the game’s rules of movement.

It emerges that it was, in fact, the Promethean figure who had caused this situation to arise, for it had not always been so:

“I saw that a place is less real if it is seen from outside, or only seen in memory; and also that if a person settles in a place and calls that place Home, then it becomes very real indeed.” (249)

This comment argues that the real place is, to use the common expression, wherever one lays one’s hat and is contingent and relative. It also opens up the way the novel inverts the notion of what is, or is not, a real space. As the Promethean figure further explains,

“Well, it came to me that if reality were removed from the worlds,

it could be concentrated in one place. And reality could be removed if someone to whom all the worlds were Home never went to any world, but only remembered them. And I mentioned this idea casually to Them.” (249)

They, it seems, took this information and created the game in order to control who has access to real spaces. As the Promethean figure points out, “when I discovered all this, each world was its own Real Place. They still seem that way to those who are not Homeward Bound. But they aren’t, not now, and that is my fault.” (249). It is this removal of reality from worlds that requires Them to have Homeward Bounders, as the Promethean says to Jamie:

“*They* have to play it that way. You see, even when worlds are real Places, they have a way of multiplying—splitting off and making new worlds—and they do it even more when they are drained of reality. *They* like that. It means more of *Them* can play. But after a while, there were so many new worlds that *They* were playing with numbers that I hadn’t known. So I couldn’t keep these new worlds from becoming dangerously real. *They* found *They* had to have people to keep these worlds unreal for *Them*. They did it by promising you all a Real Place and making sure you never found it. Home.” (253)

This idea of the nature of the “Real Place” is then further elaborated upon by Helen:

“I’d always thought the Real Place was a person’s own world. I thought that each world was the Real Place for the people living in it. But I looked at *Them* in that building and I suddenly knew it wasn’t. *They* were in the Real Place there. I think *They*’ve stolen it from people.” (208)

This confirms the inversion that has taken place between the notions of real and unreal spaces. Here in Helen’s explanation, it can be seen that what is taken for real is actually moving within the game’s rules and conventions; that is, it is actually an unreal space. Conversely, what is actually real is the space that one has to move around in freely.

This notion of individuals having their own personal spaces is further

illuminated when Helen's explains her understanding of the way the multiverse works, with each person in a "place of glass":

"All round you, at once, there are reflections, going back infinitely, until your glass is multiplied many times over. That is like the worlds in a way. Except that it is not, because now you have to imagine other people in the reflections of your glass place, and lights lit on the outside of your place of glass too, so that you can see these light reflected, outside and inside also, over and over again, along with your own place. By now, there are myriads, all shining and overlapping, and you do not know which is real. This is the way of the worlds. All are real, lights and reflections alike. We pass from one to another, like light." (95)

Now, the picture of the multiverse is no longer simply one of isolated worlds separated by boundaries that only a few can cross. Instead, the picture is of each individual having his or her own real space whereby, as Helen explains, "in the midst of all the lights you sit in your place of glass, and this you know to be real. So it is the Real Place" (95). What has happened, it appears, is that these real spaces have been taken and concentrated by *Them*, so that although people may still believe they have a real place, in fact they do not; they move within spaces controlled and restricted by others, bound by rules they have no access to. These controlled spaces are no different to planned and organised cityscapes.

Eventually, Jamie does succeed in returning home, but at first he does not realise that he is indeed home again, primarily because of the fact that more than a century has passed since he was first "twitched" out of his own world, and his world as was is now the modern world from which Adam and Vanessa (who are, in fact, his descendants) come; his family and his home are no longer there, and he has been cheated by *Them*:

You're so busy staggering along hoping, that you can't see the truth. [Ahasuerus] told me the truth. I was too busy hoping to see it. He said *They* lead you along with hope. And that's just what *They* do! They kick you out and set you going from world to world, and *They* promise you that if you can get Home, the rules

allow you to stay there. Rules! Utter cheat. *They* knew, as well as I do now, that no one who's a Homeward Bounder can ever get Home. It just can't be done. (242)

The situation is as the Promethean figure had foretold. Realising that he can never go Home causes Jamie to give up hope and, at that point, he actually takes more control of his movement: “‘Why should I keep on letting you push me about?’ I said to Them. ‘I’m going where I want to go for once’” (237). Now, Jamie knows where he wants to go and, although the call of the Bounds starts to pull at him again, he resists, despite the anguish it causes:

The call is hard enough to bear if something stops you answering it. If you turn your back on it on purpose, it gets quite horrible. But I knew it could be done. (237)

This time, then, Jamie is going to “go where [he] wanted and spite Them” (237). With his hope of ever returning home gone, Jamie returns to Prometheus and frees him from his bonds as only one without hope, “someone for whom no place is real” (250), can do. With the Promethean figure's help, Jamie gathers the Homeward Bounders for another attack on Them. On this occasion, however, the assault is successful, killing many of Them and, in particular, destroying Their special place, known as “The Real Place.”

Everyone, apart from Jamie, returns to their own home worlds. For Jamie, however, with his home as it was now gone, there is nothing to return to, and so he chooses to continue to wander through the worlds. When Jamie reveals to his friends that he is going to continue being a Homeward Bounder, his explanation adds to the information:

“It's a matter of this real place, you see. *They* got it and got to be able to play *Their* games by anchoring it down, sort of [...]. As long as we all believed there was a Real place called Home [...], *They* had this Place. And all the worlds were not so real. But now all that's gone [...] and the worlds can be real again, we need an anchor for that too. If we don't have one, *They* can have the Real



Place again. And I'm the anchor." (264)

In fact, Jamie's decision to keep moving is, in many ways, forced upon him because, as he says, "'I'm a good hundred years too late for it'" (262). However, Jamie's decision equally results from a conscious choice, one made in full recognition of the fact that he has a role to play. As Jamie says, "I had, in a way, chosen to stay a Homeward Bounder. Not that there was much choice," and the significance of this is that "I went and chose to go on being a Homeward Bounder, and that made me Real" (255). As Jamie explains to the reader,

You see how it works, do you? As long as I don't stay anywhere long, as long as I keep moving and don't think of anywhere as Home, I shall act as an anchor to keep all the worlds real. And that will keep *Them* out [...]. I'm going to keep *Them* out as long as I can. (266–7)

It is an act of spatial enabling on Jamie's part, one that is designed to ensure that each individual's space and ability to control and move within can be assured; there will be no more unreal real places.

In *The Homeward Bounders*, spaces have been turned into places and are controlled and monitored by the hooded and unknowable creatures called *Them*, creatures who oversee worlds set out and ordered and regulated, and who work to ensure that the inhabitants cannot control their own actions and movements whilst being unaware of that spatial manipulation and, indeed, that the opportunity has been removed from them. The comparison between the sinister *Them* and faceless, nameless city planning bureaucracies is not difficult to make.

However, at the same time, the novel shows that it is still possible to take ownership of a pre-existing spatiality by walking its bounds in one's own way, just as Certeau's walkers can re-appropriate the grid-like, game-board restrictions on movement that are imposed by city planners in the places of the city. Once

one knows what to look for, the Boundaries are not hard to find, as Jamie has noticed during his wanderings:

But a funny thing was that the ordinary people in the worlds seemed to know the Bounds were there, as well as the Boundaries. They never walked the Bounds of course—they never felt the call—but they must have felt something. In some worlds there were towns and villages all along a Bound. (40)

The suggestion, here, is that all individuals have an innate spatial sense of this ability to move freely but, because they believe themselves already to be free in their unreal real places, they do not exercise that spatial agency. They are merely walkers along the pre-ordained pathways. By looking past the idea of multiple worlds and considering them as multiple spaces instead, it is possible to see an overall understanding of creative spatial agency and of the construction of thirdspaces by comparing it to those who have retreated, consciously or through lack of other opportunity, into the familiarity, comfort and reliability of a three dimensional world that is actually limiting and confining.

Although this novel deals with already created spaces, unlike the characters in Narnia or the many worlds of the His Dark Materials trilogy, protagonists here are seen as capable—once they understand the option is open to them—of making their own ways in the spaces that exists. This is a version of the literary thirdspace through the function of movement as a creation of personal space rather than simply entry into an ‘other’ space. Indeed, Jamie’s final gift, addressed to the reading “you” now, is that his decision not to return home. His constant movement, means that, as he says, “You can get on and play your own lives as you like, while I just keep moving” (267). That Jamie uses the word “play” now rather than referring to lived lives as a “game” can be seen as no different from Nesbit’s differentiation of the terms. It also proclaims that having

the freedom and agency to create or construct one's own space and the freedom to move within that space, a freedom that everyone has at their disposal, should be exercised.

***Mapping Imagined Other Worlds in N. E. Bode's The Slippery Map***

*The Slippery Map* (2007), by N.E. Bode (Julianna Baggott), as a text for younger readers, offers what at first sight seems to be a far less complex 'other world' system than that of Wynne Jones's *The Homeward Bounders*. However, such appearances can be deceptive and, even though only two worlds are opened up in this text, the spatial is again an important element in terms both of how it understand the potential of thirdspace, and also how it expresses the possibility for anyone, not just the child figure, to access the spatial.

The narrative tells the story of Oyster R. Motel, a ten year old boy who had been found as a baby abandoned outside a nunnery in Baltimore, Maryland, "wrapped in a towel from the Royal Motel and placed in a Dorsey's Pickled Foods box" (3). Oyster had been found by a nun he now calls Sister Mary Many Pockets (from her practice of carrying around many items in the pockets of her nun's habit), since which time he has lived with the nuns in their world of silence, with communication only by pen and paper. For Oyster, "[t]his was his home" (3), however confined and bored he might feel as a small energetic young boy living in a nunnery, until he is whisked away—apparently a victim of the MTDs, "Mysterious Temporary Disappearances," where children disappear for a while and then return—to travel through the Gulf of Wind and Darkness and into an IOW—an "Imagined Other World"—where he must vanquish the evil Dark Mouth and rescue his parents. However, within what appears to be a standard fantasy rescue and other world salvation narrative, there is a very clear

understanding of the spatiality of thirdspace and the kind of movement that is possible within the spaces available.

Oyster's only regular contact with the world outside the nunnery comes primarily in the form of Mrs Fishback, an unpleasant woman who arrives every day with her overweight dog, Leatherbelly, to cook and run errands for the nuns. Mrs. Fishback dislikes all children, but she especially loathes Oyster, and she revels in the bad news on the television about children experiencing the MTDs; she even hopes that, unlike the cases of the other children who returned, an MTD will take Oyster permanently.

Although Oyster fears the MTDs, "More and more, Oyster wanted to go out there into the world, just for a quick exploration" (10), but the nuns remind him of the dangers outside the nunnery gates and it seems that the nuns "had always been afraid of the outside world" (10). As a result of the nun's concerns, Oyster is mostly confined to the nunnery; indeed, "Oyster wasn't allowed beyond the gate. He didn't even go to school" (9). When he is allowed outside the nunnery, he takes in all the views because "(h)e only got these little whisps of the real world once or twice a year" (24). Inevitably, perhaps, for a bored young boy closeted in a nunnery, Oyster's behaviour gets worse, not unlike Max in *Where the Wild Things Are*, eliciting numerous, but silent, complaints from the nuns.

On one occasion, when Oyster has got himself into trouble again and he feels the wrath of the nuns about to descend upon him, he hides in a broom closet in the kitchen. This is his first encounter with the Gulf of Wind and Darkness that opens between consensus reality and the other world: "He leaned against the back of the broom closet. And then the wall gave. It opened to breezy, cool dark air" (18). The parallels with the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch, and the*

*Wardrobe* are clear, especially as it seems that Oyster is being taken into another space rather than choosing to go there, with something hitting the back of his legs, a metal bucket that feels like “it was trying to scoop him up against his will” (19). It is trying to do just that, of course, but Oyster will learn this later.

On this occasion, Oyster manages, with help of a broom and the nuns, to escape the gulf that had opened behind him, but Oyster chips a tooth as he lands on the kitchen floor, necessitating a much desired trip for Oyster outside the convent to the dentist, accompanied by Mrs. Fishback and Leatherbelly. Whilst in the convent’s van, the glove compartment becomes another wind gusty hole through which Oyster can hear voices, and through which the broom lost earlier suddenly emerges, as does the bucket that had tried to take him earlier. In the panic and confusion, an accident ensues resulting in a minor injury to Mrs. Fishback, and she sends Oyster for help.

As Oyster wanders along the street, he finds himself in front of a shop with a sign saying “MOVING. CLOSED” but, through the window Oyster can see “boxes and rows of shelves filled with rolled-up scrolls of some sort” (33). Oyster is intrigued, and this will be an encounter that opens up Oyster’s understanding of the spatial. Inside the shop, he meets a woman wearing a badge that reads, “CARTOGRAPHER AND KEEPER” (34) who tells him she is a Mapkeeper for the “Imagined Other Worlds” (IOWs) of children (36):

“Imagined Other World. We all have them as children. I’m the Mapkeeper of all Imagined Other Worlds, a cartographer by trade. I map the Imagined Other Worlds of children, or at least I get them started. They usually become self-propelling.” (36)

Here, the Mapkeeper puts forward the idea that such spaces can take on a life of their own, growing and expanding, rather than being mere idle fancy, a point which lays claim to the substance of the spaces. She also adds that, “Once I get

them going, they start to record the child's imaginary updates on their own" (36) and, as the Mapkeeper says in a dream Oyster has towards the end of the novel, "So many children, so many Worlds to chart" (260).

Oyster sees that one of the maps is missing and learns that, many years ago, two children, a boy and a girl, had created a map together, and then later, when they had happened upon their map, "They stole the map and slipped inside it" (37). Apparently, the two had never returned:

"They were needed, it seems, inside of their map. The Other Worlds exist, you know. Fully and completely." (38)

Here, then, is an explicit statement as to the reality of such spaces, since not only is concreteness conferred by the fact that such spaces can be mapped, which surprises an unknowing Oyster, but the spaces can also be entered rather than simply dreamed about:

"The maps are slippery," she explained, peering at him over her glasses. "One can slip inside of a slippery map, if it's large and well imagined. One can slip into the world itself. All you need is the sharp edge of something and, well, it's best to travel through the Gulf of Wind and darkness *in* something." (38)

Again, the Mapkeeper's comments are an almost exact recitation of the principles behind the creation of thirdspace. Being able to travel to another space is a new idea for Oyster, but it is one that fires his imagination: "He loved the idea of slipping into a map—into his own map" (38), especially since, as Oyster exclaims to the Mapkeeper, because of his present circumstances, "I want to escape. [...] I want to go and be a hero, and prove to them I'm worthy" (40). Oyster thinks the nuns have stopped caring for him and believes himself to be rejected and a failure.

In fact, Oyster "*had* imagined another world: a green backyard with a swing set and his parents" (39) and, when he actually looks at his own, very

small map, he sees, “a colored map of a yard, a house, a swing set. It was small and lacked detail—it was just a crayon square with a labeled *X* for the swing set”

(44). However, now that he has been shown the potential to create space, Oyster begins to consider what that might mean:

If he imagined his green yard and his house and his swing set and his parents and the boy with the blue umbrella clearly enough, with more detail, would the map become big enough for him to slip into that Other World? (47)

His map may be small and ill-formed map, but importantly, as the Mapkeeper tells him, “You haven’t given up on it. Not yet! But they usually all do in time” (36). This references the idea that adults forget about their “maps” because they lose the ability or desire to use their imaginations in a spatial fashion, although it is also clear that conforming to the conventions of utilising places is not necessarily a feature of all adults. However, as the Mapkeeper explains,

“I keep the maps. If I don’t, who will? People outgrow imaginations, you know, most often when they become adults, but I keep the IOWs, just in case.” (36)

Thus, the imaginative potential for space-making may be suppressed, but the Mapkeeper argues for the possibility that even adults can return to such creative imagining. When the Mapkeeper is distracted, Oyster takes his own map and leaves.

At the dentist, another MTD incident occurs when the sink opens up into a hole just as Oyster is starting to feel somewhat concerned and is trying to escape from the dentist, Dr. Fromler; the sink basin opens wide, and Oyster sees the silver bucket he had first seen in the convent broom closet. This time, however, Oyster sees an opportunity to escape from the dentist’s clutches:

Oyster held tight to the edge of the bucket and jumped for the black hole of the basin. The sink basin’s drain widened so that Oyster and Leatherbelly slid through, then fell into darkness. (59)

Oyster and the dog emerge out of the darkness, “in Boneland, just west of the Pinch-Eye Mountains, about three miles to the Bridge to Nowhere” (66). One of the friendly inhabitants of this Imaginary Other World, a Perth, called Hopps, tell him, “It’s your parents’ map [...]. They created this World as children, and then they joined us” (73). Oyster is in his parents’ Imagined Other World, the map for which “was hand-drawn—much like the one in his pocket—with different colored inks, but this one was hugely detailed. There were shop names and treetops and ripples drawn into a river” (67), a world, as Oyster later describes it, that is “So rich! So fully imagined! So terrifying” (106). Oyster’s parents had been childhood friends who, stuck in Johns Hopkins University Housing were “shushed children, told to be quiet, and with little to do, they made up the stories of Perths and the Pinch-Eye Mountains and Boneland” (108). Eventually, they had encountered the Mapkeeper and found the map of their fantasy Imaginary Other World and, quite by accident, discovered that a small tear in the map opened up a portal between the two spaces. Their map had been drawn on the back of a map of Baltimore, and this is why the tear or rip opens up a way between the two worlds.

Oyster learns that his abandonment had actually been his parents’ attempt to save him from the dangers in this other world. With his parents now imprisoned in their own world, Oyster then finds himself pushed into the position of having to rescue the subjugated inhabitants of this other world and rescue his parents. To do this, he must journey across this new land and destroy the evil Dark Mouth who has the land in his control, and who harbours plans to get Oyster’s parents’ map “so that he can go through it and take over the land on the other side” (113), the land of consensus reality. Oyster’s journey of adventure



takes him across rivers and down through tunnels underground, and encounters with strange and dangerous creatures. Even the nuns find themselves pouring through the gap to find Oyster (and, as it transpires, help him to victory), showing again that movement within spaces is not only the preserve of the very young.

As part of this rescue mission, Oyster learns that one way that the inhabitants of Boneland have been kept subdued is through Dark Mouth's television company showing a populist programme called the Vince Vance Show, with its "'Home Sweet Home' campaign" (81), and the only books allowed are "'Home Sweet Home' companions" (105). This campaign to keep the inhabitants at home and placid marks the home space as another instance of confinement, a confinement strengthened by the panopticon of constant surveillance for, as Vince Vance confesses,

"We have ears in every wall. Eyes in every sliver of light. Dark Mouth is attentive. He's watching over you." (176)

It is an idea that is also reinforced when Oyster is captured and taken to Vince Vance's house, where he is seduced by a wonderful house and toys and, when Oyster asks if it is all real, the answer is that "It's all as real as you want it to be!" However, this is an unreal place in the sense that it will also be where Oyster will be confined unless he can overcome the temptation and escape.

Eventually, Oyster escapes and manages to defeat Dark Mouth. Unfortunately, in the struggle, Oyster rips his parents' map in half: "[i]ts halves snapped and rolled into themselves [...]. Oyster knew that the map was ruined. It couldn't be fixed" (248). It seems that Oyster has failed, and, although he has freed the inhabitants of Boneland, he and his parents and the nuns are now stuck there. This situation places Oyster in a quandary, one much like that which Max

encounters in *Where the Wild Things Are*: “I’m so happy here,” says Oyster, “[b]ut I want to go home, too” (263).

Suddenly, Oyster remembers that he has his own map of his own Imagined Other World, a map which now, as he has encountered more and more wonders that have sparked his imagination, has grown and developed. As Oyster realises, “I’ve been imagining! I really have! I have let my imagination loose” (265), and so, now, “[h]is map was full and fat” (265), replete with the imaginings of Oyster’s mind. It shows,

the house he’d imagined with his parents, the backyard with the swing set, the garden, the clothesline. On one side of the Map there was the Gulf of Wind and Darkness, which led to Boneland and what was now called the breathing river of Nunly Snores. There was a large section on the underground field with all of the eye and fire holes of dragons marked clearly Evil Fishback Field—and the Dragons were red. Dark Mouth’s prison, The Torch, drawn with exact detail, including the shiny silver hook. On the other side, Oyster saw the nunnery and the Dragon Palace and the chair where the boy with leg braces sat and the library of Johns Hopkins and Dr. Fromler’s Dentistry and, not far off, the Mapkeeper’s shop. (266)

Many of these things relate directly to Oyster’s real world experience: the red Dragon from the Chinese restaurant near the nunnery, the sound of the nuns snores that has become a part of the Breathing River’s noise, even the awful Mrs. Fishback. This world of Oyster’s is, therefore, the real and imagined and more. With the help of his own map, Oyster returns to the nunnery, sure in the knowledge that he (and his parents and new found friends from the Imagined Other World) can come and go as he pleases, and that his freedom to move within spaces is his to control.

In *The Slippery Map*, the initial narrative thread suggests another presentation of an ‘other world’ that is not created by the child protagonist and which is not, therefore, a space that can be owned by the protagonists. In this

case, much like the novels I discussed in the previous chapter, Oyster finds himself being brought into a thirdspace that was created by someone else. However, one key difference is that it is a space that is real and imagined and experienced, both by Oyster's parents (who have spent almost all their lives in their Imagined Other World) and by Oyster, first as inhabitant (it emerges that Oyster had actually been born in the Imagine Other World before being taken to Baltimore and the nuns), then as visitor, and finally as creator of his own version of the space.

In addition, when Oyster asks why his parents had imagined all the bad things in their world the explanation he is given that "their own world had problems," and that "they couldn't leave all of the old world behind while imagining the new one" (106), and "the worlds influence each other sometimes" (106). Indeed, Oysters parents had "translated things from the old world into the new" (106) to create a real and imagined space, and even Oyster recognises this to be so: "My old world and this World—it's a translation" (199). This idea of translating spaces is a useful analogy, here, for the process of creating a thirdspace; it suggests the involvement of an active imagination, one that is connected, but not wholly tied, to the original, and that once one understand the potential to create a thirdspace it can grow and develop (and even have commonality with the thirdspaces of others, although each develops independently). As the Perth, Hopps, says to Oyster:

"The Imagination is its own force. Once you fully imagine something, it is, in a sense, true. It exists. And, once in motion, it takes on a life of its own" (113).

This explanation is, perhaps, a succinct summary of the literary thirdspace process in fantasy 'other world' fiction.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

The texts that I have discussed in this chapter can all be seen, in their own individual ways, to incline towards the more spatially active end of the thirdspace cline as instances of space-making, and as texts that offer understandings of the protagonist as owner of the process of creating personal spaces. Although, apart from *The Homeward Bounders*, each of the texts I have discussed can still be said to fall within the scope of the broader home-away-home paradigm, what is seen in the texts is a fluidity within and between different spaces, with different spaces offering different and more intricate openings of spatiality, than the formula that returns protagonists to the home place can fully account for.

As has also been seen, these spaces do not need to be felicitous either for, in all the texts I have discussed, the spaces that protagonists enter are generally such that few would willingly venture into them. Whilst it is true that, on occasion, ‘other’ places can initially present themselves as a kind of *locus amoenus*, or as “friendly spaces” (Honeyman 117), this initial appearance often belies the true nature of the spaces. This being the case, why would a child protagonist create such a world as a third space? It seems logical that an unappealing place could be a deterring factor in terms of protagonists wishing to be emplaced in them, and it also seems to ring true that, by making the spaces full of darkness, danger and death, the home location becomes more appealing in comparison.

However, whilst the unappealing nature of the away place may prove an advantage in terms of suggesting the message that home is best in the spatially inert narratives I discussed in the previous chapter, how can it be the case that

more spatially dynamic narratives also exhibit spaces that are less than desirable? The answer, here, must be that the dangers of the away space can be seen as playing spaces such that, just as with children playing their own war games, where players ‘die’ or are injured, it is possible to see that these “dangers and difficulties simply heighten the pleasure as they are overcome” (Manlove, *Alice* 40); in effect, the more the difficulties, the more the element of playing is enhanced. In effect, dangerous spaces can be considered as an integral part of the playing that creates the thirdspace. Moreover, as with Max in *Where The Wild Things Are*, or Donald in *A Game of Dark*, it is more likely to be a moment of spontaneity that brings a thirdspace into being, rather than the giving of access to an already constructed location such as Narnia, or the ‘other’ house in *Coraline* into which protagonists are subsequently permitted entry

What the texts in this chapter point towards, therefore is a situation where, when the spatial constraints of consensus reality are removed or shown to be impositions, child protagonists are able to exercise a basic agency through creating and becoming emplaced in another space. Physical places such as a bedroom (and by extension other places both inside and outside the home) can become part of a constructed and immersive thirdspace created by protagonists, a space that resolves itself into an often complex and lived experience that equates in practice to the Cartesian “real” world inasmuch as

[t]he reality of everyday life is organized around the “here” of my body and the “now” of my present. This “here and now” is the focus of my attention to the reality of everyday life. What is “here and now” presented to me in everyday life is the *realis sunum* of my consciousness. (Berger and Luckman 36)

This *realis sunum* of an individual’s consciousness is a spatial position based not on the measurements of place, but on the response to the space. It may be

temporary for, within the narrative structures of the genre, there is almost always the “the inevitable reestablishment of order” at the end, where “[t]he adult norm is always restored” (Nikolajeva, “Theory” 17). However, those who create once can do so again, and they are able to leave any space of their own volition through their own space-making faculties as narrative strolls in a particular act of world-building. Thus, one act of creation may have reached an endpoint, but the power to create and recreate more spaces, and the will to connect them, always remains as a virtual resource for protagonists to make use of.

These instances of literary thirdspace suggest that agency is located in the interplay of the constructive subject and the constructed space (which, given the variety of constructions seen in ‘other world’ fantasy texts, also implies that there should be multiplicity of conceptions of agency). Whilst in those novels where creative space-making is restricted, the question is not so much one of subjectivity as it is one of subjectivity through space-making, locating the subject through the spatial could even argue for the subject existing outside of language. If this understanding is correct, it would tend to confirm that “[c]hildren and young people probably want spaces suitable less for doing and more for being” (Thomson and Philo 126). The the next consideration, therefore, must be that of what it is that child readers (or, indeed, any readers) can take from these texts in terms of the self and the spatial. This is the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter Four: Where Are We Now?

I now turn my discussions towards the social and cultural aspects of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction on the basis that “freedom of form does not liberate fantasy from its social context” (Knowles and Malmkjær 225). Whilst heeding Owain Jones’s warning that “‘seeing through the eyes’ of the subject, is inevitably trying to enter the other space of children’s worlds and needs to recognise the limits” (197), this chapter addresses the connection between readers and the spaces they find in fantasy texts as part of an examination of how the thirdspace approach to fantasy fiction for children might relate more specifically to readers and their experiences of the world of consensus reality. and to readers’ own understandings of spatial agency regardless of any authorial intent.

Primarily drawing again on the ideas of Certeau. I discuss first another form of presentation of the spatiality of fantasy fiction, specifically the visual, through an examination of the endpaper maps that are often found in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction. From this opening, I discuss how the reader can become involved in the active process of space-making through encountering such representations of places and spaces. I will then consider how ideas of the author as originator and controller of textual space contrast with notions of the text as a form of play and interplay between readers and authors. Then, working through Doležel’s suggestion that perceptions of both real and literary world differ little in substance, and that this position shifts the argument from a suspension of disbelief to a process of creative formation of belief, I will then move on to examine how spatial understandings drawn from literary representations can be

utilised in the world of consensus reality, thus drawing a path back to social ideas of space-making that I set out in Chapter One, and which formed the basis for ideas of a literary thirdspace.

Finally, I consider Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*, a novel that is not itself a fantasy text, but which can provide an illustration both for the ideas I outline in this chapter regarding the influence of spatial representations on readers' real world spatial activities and playing, and a basis for commenting on the various elements of spatiality outlined in the thesis as a whole. In addition, applying notions of a literary thirdspace to consider a text that is not 'other world' fantasy fiction will also point towards how literary thirdspace can be also be used to examine other genres of children's fiction and further open up discussion of how the literary in general is linked to the every day of readers.

I take this path because, as Hunt has stated, "the poetics of children's literature are bound to the practical, the local, the concrete" ("Poetics" 40), and yet that connection is not always made. Many of the theories espoused on fantasy fiction to date do not generally, as Jack Zipes observes, "explore the social, cultural and political ramifications of fantasy" and—more pertinent to my discussions—within their pages, says Zipes, "there is hardly a reference to young readers and the different ways which they might perceive fantasy works" (188). This is a significant omission given the amount of fantasy literature available for child readers.

Perhaps this lack of reference to the worlds of child readers and how they perceive the spaces of fantasy 'other world' texts is significant of a general lack of appreciation of the value and import of fantasy literature for children from critics outside the field of children's literature studies. Perhaps, too, "the



conventional tendency to throw together children and fantasy arises from the conviction of both the child's greater gullibility and fantasy's inherent irrationality" (Veldman 48) in a derogatory nod to both the genre and its readership. Hunt even asserts that the automatic association between fantasy and children's literature is "bizarre" because, as he says, fantasy "concentrates on worlds other than this one: alternate worlds—desirable, if unattainable options," and, therefore, "[w]hy should this be thought to be of interest to child readers?" ("Introduction" 4). This is a point reiterated in Wood's more specific question: "What good does it do to escape to wonderful imaginary places filled with satisfactions we can only yearn for, never experience—dæmons, armored bears, mulefa?" (256). What good indeed, when even for most adults, "the idea of parallel realities is not yet solidly established in our private encyclopedias, and the text must give strong cues for us to suspend momentarily our intuitive belief in a classical cosmology" (Ryan, "Parallel" 671)? How could child readers gain anything from narratives that present a spatiality that is, in theory, beyond their knowledge and experience?

Clearly, however, young readers (and, indeed, older readers) do find fantasy texts appealing enough to keep reading and re-reading them, and the possible reasons for that demand consideration. It is, of course, all but impossible to really know "the process by which interpreters reconstruct the story worlds encoded in narrative" (Herman, *Story* 5), but it is possible to point to what may be the case, and clearly the range of spaces available in fantasy texts, whether described in detail or not, provides a main focus for attention. Now, therefore, I will consider a form of presentation of the spatial in fantasy texts that has similarly received relatively little critical attention in the past, a form that is

amenable to discussions both of how reader's might read and perceive presentations of the spatial, and how these readings might be understood and taken up as spatial tactics, as a means to open up and actualise the spatial within their own personal domains and lived lives. I am referring to literary fantasy maps.<sup>67</sup>

### *Visualising Thirdspace*

Hunt has pointed out that the very common, structural plot device of the journey in children's novels, something that is particularly the case with fantasy 'other world' fiction, of course, has brought about "a singular use of landscape, and the map" (*Introduction* 179) in children's fiction. Indeed, in N. E. Bode's *The Slippery Map*, the key means of movement between world spaces was the eponymous map. *The Slippery Map*, however, does not include an illustration of the map itself, but illustrated maps are often found in fantasy 'other world' novels, either on the endpaper or frontispiece pages. Indeed, fantasy 'other world' novels lend themselves to the inclusion of maps as an additional presentation of the creation of space and, for W. F. H. Nicolaisen, "the more imaginary a landscape becomes the more mappable it becomes or the more it demands a map to prove its existence" (qtd. in Honeyman 123). Indeed, so strong a desire for maps is there that, for texts without an original map, they are often drawn later.<sup>68</sup>

In the previous chapter, my examination of *Where the Wild Things Are* noted that the pictorial form can enable a more immediate understanding of the spatiality of the narrative. With maps, however, the often close relationship that exists between text and image in picture books does not necessarily apply because maps usually have a separate existence, and rarely are they found within

the text itself. This separation from the text suggests that they can and do exist independently and for a larger purpose than being purely illustrations with decorative value (however artistic they may be), or as serving only to complement the textual content, or even being what Genette would see as examples of a “paratext” (*Paratexts* 1). Instead, as with certain types of illustration, they can “create independent story lines which only occasionally overlap with the verbal layer of a particular work” (Sikorska 202) as part of what Victor Watson suggests is “both a signal and an invitation to a special kind of reading game” (*Reading* 110). This idea is one that I explore further as another way to both explain and examine how readers can understand notions of the spatial through textual encounters.

Not everyone possesses such a positive perspective on the creative spatial possibilities of literary maps however. Mendlesohn, for example, has claimed that “the very presence of maps at the front of many fantasies implies that the destination and its meanings are known” (4), which argues for a closure of the spatial, and which is compatible with the notion of an enforced return home. Mendlesohn also believes that such maps “are no more geography than chronology and legend are history,” and that they “fix the interpretation of a landscape” and, in so doing, “complete the denial of discourse” (14). By this reckoning, as Julia Pond also argues, “[a]s soon as a space is mapped, it loses potential” (49), a position that recognises all such maps as being spatially inert. With this approach, a literary map can only be considered as something fixed and bounded, as a set apart, miniature and entire world that is child-sized and manageable, something which also marks these types of texts as being writerly rather than readerly.<sup>69</sup>

Deirdre Baker also sees a lack of diversity in these maps, claiming that this uniformity is indicative of the poor quality of the fantasy world narratives themselves. For Baker, there is a similarity in “the physical layout of a number of invented worlds,” and this lack of variety, she states, “often indicates a lack of innovation in the ideological or philosophical ideas behind the stories” (237). Baker argues that “it’s as if the sameness of geographical layout determines a sameness in simplistic moral or metaphysical vision” (242). I have already considered how fantasy ‘other world’ narratives are not as simple in spatial terms as some might suggest, but such understandings as expressed by Baker overlook the way sameness arises from conventions—both textual and visual—that can act as a kind of short-cut for authors and readers to move past what would otherwise require layers of descriptiveness. Such understandings also defer to an author (or, perhaps, illustrator) centred perspective but, as with written texts, once out of the hands of the originator, there is no guarantee as to how a text of any kind will be received.

Approaches such as Baker’s also overlook the actual nature of the map-reading process itself, a process that can provide a very different perspective. To an even larger degree than is the case with scientific maps, literary maps ask the ‘reader’ to trust in evidence that contains any number of omissions or unverifiable details, and to believe that symbols, points, lines, and areas viewable on a two-dimensional sheet of paper equate to a multidimensional world in space and time. In fact, in this respect, literary maps are much like other maps because, as Phillip and Juliana Muehrcke point out, any kind of map is

a paradox in that physically it is mere marks on sheets of paper, yet visually it brings to mind a multidimensional world, containing objects and even emotions not perceived directly on the piece of paper. (323)

In light of this ability of maps in general to invoke multiple spatial responses, even a map of a real place, say Muehrcke and Muehrcke, is able to make readers

think in terms of a whole range of scales, even though the map itself is limited to one scale. Thus, the same map can evoke things as large as a mountain and a river and things as small as ‘a deer’s eye’ and ‘a single stone’. (323)

In effect, the paper image becomes another kind of real that can be combined with the imagined to create something more.

Given such a potential to combine the imagined and more, reading maps of unreal spaces sets the ground for a constructive process where the communicative interaction between reader and map does not fix places; rather, it questions the fixedness of places. Thus, places and spaces are replaced rather than simply represented; the map *becomes* the territory. This notion recalls Jean Baudrillard’s idea that the perceived world is actually a “precession of simulacra,” a product of “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality,” and where it is “the map that precedes the territory [...] that engenders the territory” (1).<sup>70</sup> However, although this may be an accurate assessment, it is also the case that these literary maps of unreal places *are* the territory in the minds of its readers; “[r]ecognising its status, fantasy disavows the very possibility of a territory which is not its map” (Bould 81). As J. B. Post comments,

[a]ny graphic representation, be it print, a map or a view, has an immediacy which compels an acceptance and this is why we accept a map of an imaginary land even when we know the countryside is a fabrication. (10)

Consequently, maps become available as effectively real spaces for exploration just as much as do those spaces described only in words.

There is a literary, if magical, example of how this can work in the description of the map made by the magician in Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which the magician bases on the itinerary narrated by the Dawn Treader's captain, Drinian, for

everything he described came out on the parchment in fine clear lines till at last each sheet was a splendid map of the Eastern Ocean, showing Galma, Terebinthia, the Seven Isles, the Lone Islands, Dragon Island, Burnt Island, Deathwater, and the land of the Duffers itself, all exactly the right sizes and in the right positions. They were the first maps ever made of those seas and better than any that have been made since without magic. For on these, though the towns and mountains looked at first just as they would on an ordinary map, when the Magician lent them a magnifying glass you saw that they were perfect little pictures of the real things, so that you could see the very castle and slave market and streets in Narrowhaven, all very clear though very distant, like things seen through the wrong end of a telescope. (145–6)

The way such maps can 'come alive' suggests the potential for an experiential relationship between map-reader and map through the imaginative activity of map reading. Map symbols, in themselves, are essentially meaningless without some mechanism that can connect them with what they represent and so, rather than an act of simply 'tracing' the marks of routes and places, the creative reader of maps in fact re-maps the territory, creating new connections and understandings. To achieve a fuller meaning, the map-reader must go beyond the physical presence of ink on paper. While the graphemes that comprise the written text can only be read and understood by viewing them in a particular way, the possibility of viewing the map from different angles, and even upside down, offers more scope for the eye (and the imaginative mind) to travel in different directions.

Moreover, regardless of style, in most literary maps, and particularly those of fantasy spaces, it is usually the case that notions of Cartesian spatial

certitude can be contradicted or even subverted by the position of objects on the map. Objects, for example, may be shown as taller or shorter than they really are in comparison to other objects. Typical of this generally less formal, and more individually artistic, style when compared to scientific maps, for instance, is that they commonly lack a legend or specific measurement of scale other than the ubiquitous compass in one corner. However, this is not necessarily a problem for, as Katharine Harmon observes of maps generally, those which “ignore mapping conventions” are the most intriguing in that they “find their essence in some other goal than just taking us from point A to point B” (10). On most literary maps in children’s fiction, this lack of indication of the rules of transformation between the representation and what is represented means that such a relationship remains open to individual interpretation.

This openness is also true of actions, for movement is not an uncommon feature of such maps, whereby “[t]he map expresses the identity of the journey and what one journeys through. It merges with its object, when the object itself is movement” (Deleuze, *Essays* 61). On the matter of maps and movement, Certeau has observed of the pre-Enlightenment map-making process that it involved a combination of both the spatial necessities of map making and the qualities of narrative storytelling. As he notes, these early maps included

only the rectilinear marking out of itineraries (performative indications chiefly concerning pilgrimages), along with the stops one was to make (cities which one was to pass through, spend the night in, pray at, etc.) and distances calculated in hours or in days, that is, in terms of the time it would take to cover them on foot. Each of these maps is a memorandum prescribing actions. (120)

However, from that original, performance oriented nature of the map—with its inherent narrative of movement—the modern, scientific turn in cartography demands, says Certeau, the removal of such narrative elements along with iconic

figures such as ships, monsters, strange animals, and other characters that implicitly refer to the journeys involved. This means, he adds, that “the map has slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the condition of its possibility” (120); they are no longer potential spaces for the journey. Thus, Certeau concludes that the scientific map is now “a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a ‘state’ of geographical knowledge” (121). Such maps no longer function as they had done in the past.

Certeau also separates geographical representations as being one of two possible types: ‘maps’ or ‘tours’. ‘Maps’, he believes, are only abstracted accounts of spatial relations. As a result, for Certeau ‘maps’ delimit places, whereas ‘tours’ are narratives from the traveller or narrator’s viewpoint. ‘Tours’ describe movements through spaces, says Certeau, and the rhetoric of the ‘tour’ contains within it attention to the effects of the tour, its goals and potentials, its limitations and its obligations (118–22).<sup>71</sup> In similar vein, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the processes of ‘mapping’ and ‘tracing’ in that they see “Tracing” (Certeau’s “map”) as being a “repetitive mimicry,” whilst “Mapping” (Certeau’s “tour”) is “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” and thus (as with Certeau) relates to performance (*Thousand* 12). In addition, they say, “[t]he map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields. [...] The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions” (12). Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the rhizomic also connects to the concepts of mapping and tracing, since the rhizome is “*a map and not a tracing*” (12, original emphasis), and the rhizome, “pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map



that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight” (21). They are not, therefore, fixed and immediately knowable.

Thus, in much the same way that Barthes suggests that entering a text is the “entrance into a network with a thousand entrances” that gives a perspective “whose vanishing point is nonetheless ceaselessly pushed back, mysteriously opened” (*S/Z* 12), literary maps tend to have no starting points either. There are no ‘You are Here’ signs, and there are rarely ever ‘tracings’ to indicate the direction of characters’ movements. Certainly, reading the accompanying text can give clues to how the map might relay spatial information about the narrative but, even after reading the text, it is not always possible to work out exact points of reference on the map. For some, however, the urge to plot and thereby fix characters’ routes can be overwhelming, as in the case of Karen Wynn Fonstad’s *The Atlas of Middle Earth*, which marks out every important journey in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* using textual information and other Tolkien writings. However, by doing so, what emerges is a ‘map’ (Certeau) or ‘tracing’ (Deleuze and Guattari), confining and delimiting the spatial.

Similarly, where early cartography left blank spaces for the unknown, or filled empty spaces with icons and symbols, and thereby eluded an exhaustive, totalising picture, the literary maps in children’s literature often include tracts of “white space” or feature unfinished roads and paths. The visual nature of the space of a map draws attention to these absences, oddities and instances of incompleteness, and these ‘blank’ spaces and unfinished routes on literary maps can encourage a greater interaction with the map because, in one sense, this strangeness and openness requires and engenders a projection of the reader’s

own space-making skills onto the area of the map; the open spaces remain available to be played with and filled in whatever way seems suitable.

Moreover, in a further move away from the empirical, many of these maps also offer multiple or shifting perspectives. These unstable perspectives mean that the eye is always moving across the space, and so the landscape is never fixed, controlled or delimited. Thus, “[a]s a text, the map is inherently unstable, its meaning open to challenge and change” (Phillips 19), and this is even more likely to be a characteristic of literary maps, one that inevitably brings with it the notion of the ‘reader’ and the active, participatory role that is required when viewing/reading maps.

Often, too, areas narrated in the text do not appear on the map. Although in the previous chapter, I discussed the limiting nature of the spatiality of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, in the map that accompanies Pullman’s *Lyra’s Oxford* (2003), a more open understanding of space can be seen.<sup>72</sup> The whole of the city is shown, even though the actual journey that Lyra takes during the course of the narrative is confined to only a few of the roads, and many of the locations on the map are not mentioned in the narrative at all. Again, there are shifts in perspectives and additional iconography, both of which hark back to early cartographic styles but, more specifically, there is the map’s marginalia; “Mary Malone lives here,” and “To Sir Charles Latrom’s house,” both of which directions refer to characters and places that actually feature in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, but which do not figure directly in the narrative of *Lyra’s Oxford*, thus sending the reader beyond the frame of both the map and the narrative. The space of the map is, therefore, always more than what is contained within its arbitrary borders; the space of the map always extends beyond.

The notion of there being more beyond means that any suggestion that a fixed and singular route is all that should be accounted for in such representations is like suggesting that a single track through a dark wood *is* the wood. Any route is inevitably though a particular landscape that stretches much further than the borders of the path; indeed, the path through the wood does not exist without the other features of the wood that surround it. Extracting the path from the landscape through which it passes gives only a minimal understanding to the value and purpose of the entirety of the spatial environment.

Thus, to view any map (literary or not), as a fixed, bounded, bordered space is to view it in a rationalist, modernist way that demands order and control. To suggest that the borders of the map denote the representation's spatial boundaries is an over-simplification, for "only the most naive map reader would assume that the world ends at the edges of a map" (Muehrcke and Muehrcke 324). There are always other spaces, spaces that exist outside the borders of the map. In Norton Juster's *The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961), for example, the space that the protagonist, Milo, visits is even called, 'The Lands Beyond'. The endpaper map is said in the novel to be the same map that Milo receives along with the self-assembly tollbooth and is as described in the narrative. Playfully, the map is said to be "up-to-date and carefully drawn by master cartographers, depicting natural and man-made features" (11).<sup>73</sup> This is the cartographic nod to the real status of the space that is also seen in textual representations.

Milo's tollbooth in his very real bedroom, and the narrative fantasy Castle in the Air, however, are both shown as 'off' the map, suggesting they have the same substance, and the Princess of Sweet Rhyme even tells Milo that "many places you would like to see are just off the map" (233). This point is reiterated

in the note that Milo finds at the end of the novel, after the tollbooth vanishes, which informs him that

IT'S TRUE THAT THERE ARE MANY LANDS YOU'VE STILL TO VISIT (SOME OF WHICH ARE NOT EVEN ON THE MAP) AND WONDERFUL THINGS TO SEE (THAT NO ONE HAS YET IMAGINED) (254).

The absence of places referred to, or the presence on these maps of places not referred to, effectively opens the map up as indeterminate space, and opens up the potential for constructive readings of that space, even if that possibility is never actualised. In this respect, the literary map creates its own territory, and its reference is as much to its own identity as it is to the accompanying text (and, in many cases, probably more so given the comparative looseness of the illustration in terms of geographical specificities).<sup>74</sup>

In fact, such maps are more reminiscent of those schematic or topological maps that deliberately do not attempt to represent scale or offer a plethora of details, a notable example being the London Underground (Tube) map.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, in the way these topological maps present places and spaces, they relate very closely to the kind of literary maps I am discussing in that, even though they represent 'real' places, they present a particular view of that space that remains more open and readerly than perhaps would a scientific, cartographic map and, for Ryan, scientific "[r]epresentations of space are not necessarily narratives" ("Space" 420). However, this surely depends on the position of the reader. For example, the main, fold-out map in the original edition of Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972), drawn by Marilyn Hemmett, shows a part of the county of Hampshire in England. With only a few additions locating warrens from the narrative, the map has the appearance of a standard British Ordnance Survey map (a very scientific, topographical representation), and yet it is still possible

for the reader to range over the contour lines and create individual pathways and purposes.

This possibility relates specifically to the narrative presentation of the spatial in that any sufficiently well realised landscape in a narrative should simultaneously offer not just one, but a multiplicity of possible routes that might be taken. One such a novel is Diana Wynne Jones's *The Merlin Conspiracy*, where the protagonists, Roddy and Nick, follow separate, but ultimately converging, routes, separately, at first in different landscapes in different worlds, and then in the same one. Usually, however, a narrative will only relate the one path actually taken, but this does not in any way deny the possibility of other routes, and, in theory at least, each novel has a potential for multiple paths (and therefore, multiple possible narratives); there are always other paths not followed by the protagonist(s). Indeed, as Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan notes of the novel,

holes or gaps are so central in narrative fiction because the materials the text provides for the reconstruction of a world (or a story) are insufficient for saturation. No matter how detailed the presentations, further questions can always be asked; story gaps always remain open. (127)

Thus, just as with the story world that the reader constructs from the incomplete textual narrative, the reader must also complete the picture for a map since each map holds a number of spatial possibilities that remain, to varying degrees, unactualised until the reader chooses re-make them and thereby to take ownership of the space.

Reading a literary map presents multiple choices from which the reader may select routes or ways through in an ever-changing series of “wandering lines” (Certeau xviii). It seems that this activity is not asking too much of young readers. Research done by Nora Newcombe and Janellen Huttenlocher suggests

that, by the age of three, children manage to “use maps presented to them in alignment with the real world to learn about the associatively coded placement of objects denoted by somewhat iconic, and even arbitrary, visual elements,” and that they have “some ability to learn about distances in simple situations and to coordinate oblique and eye-level views of a space” (173) skills which can develop rapidly in succeeding years.

In the real world, as Malpas points out, “[w]e understand a particular space through being able to grasp the sorts of ‘narratives of action’ that are possible within that space” (186). Certeau’s point was that modern utilisations of space often create relationships in which the agency of the individual is restricted by social, historical and cultural conventions for using that space, whereas early maps, as ‘tours’, were models *for*, rather than models *of*. Nevertheless, “[t]he map is more a work of the creative imagination than is popularly recognized” (Tuan, “Realism” 441) and so, despite Certeau’s pessimism about the totalising and restrictive nature of modern maps, even they can be re-read in individual ways not envisaged by their makers.

Similarly, the literary map presents space rather than representing it, and presents space that is inherently multiple, heterogeneous, and contingent. To ‘read’ a literary map, one needs the faculty of imagination, and for Muehrcke and Muehrcke, “[a] person with imagination can be inspired by a map to do more than look at it, to enter the reality it depicts” (324). Thus, the agency of map ‘reading’ becomes an enabling enterprise. With the literary map, the original creative act is re-made in the act of reading by unfolding potential; territory is remade over and over again, each time with new and diverse consequences. These maps, then, can offer up spatial potential for the reader, open to repeatedly

remaking territory, and constantly producing new and different consequences, and representing the potentiality of movement(s), even if that potential is never actualised.

This spatial potential means that, regardless of the original intent in how the maps were drawn up, the act of reading literary maps actually reveals their full potential, not so much in terms of their direct connection to the texts they accompany, but through the reader's imagination and in the multiple and individual traverses of the space that the reader can create. These maps may not technically represent depictions of real places, but they do constitute the real of the page as a part of the book and as a part of the readers interaction with the book in consensus reality. Thus, they are the real that is reimagined and reinvented through a creative act of space-making. Whether the presentation is of a fantasy place or a real place, therefore, each map reading has the potential to become a walk across the stage, each reading creates that map anew with different associations, and each reading is a unique narrative that changes with each imagined 'tour' because it is engendered by a particular viewpoint.

Such maps offer an invitation to readers to appropriate the space for themselves, an opportunity to rewrite the text of the map, and even purposefully to misinterpret its original intent; in effect, "[t]he coded visual language of maps is one we all know, but in making maps of our worlds we each have our own dialect" (Harmon 11). Thus, Honeyman's suggestion that, "mapping may provide a sense of empowerment and control to the child reader, but it also territorializes childhood for the author and adult" (122) really refers to the notion of maps as a totalising 'tableau' of a static, controlled geography (much like a board game). An extreme example of this, perhaps, is the map accompanying Philip Pullman's

*Once Upon a Time in the North* (2008), a companion volume to the His Dark Materials trilogy, where the “map” is found in a pocket at the back of the book, and is actually designed as a board game that can be played by readers (a game, it should be noted, where the object is *not* to reach the end point). Turning the map into a game with fixed rules marks it, if the rules of the game are followed, as a fixed space that is unreadable other than as the originator intended. It is not coincidental, therefore, that the spatially closed His Dark Materials trilogy should also be visually represented as closed in this companion text. Fortunately, of course, any reader of this map does not have to play the game, and can still remake the space of the map without adherence to the designated rules.

Such a specifically closed instance aside, a literary map can be better thought of as a cartographic stage for playing, upon which any number of spatial performances are possible through the act of reading the map. Thus, like Certeau’s city walkers, the actualisation of cartographic space by the reader’s “entry” into the literary map initiates any number of new narratives that go beyond any limit imposed by a more formal understanding of the map as fixed. At the same time, the freedom that these maps offer to readers in terms of the infinite possibilities to make spatial connections signifies the inability to regulate the behaviour of the readers who use them, and who can performatively explore them as enabling acts of the imagination in an endless play of map-reading. In doing this, they present instances of creative space-making that operate in the same way as a thirdspace, and afford readers the opportunity to involve themselves in that creative experience directly rather than only seeing the potential through the narrative.



There is, of course, a risk that, as Jess Edwards suggests, such an approach “over-reads the map, reifying and totalizing its meaning; filling its apparent silences with misplaced rhetorics from elsewhere,” thereby producing, “idealizing analyses of the ‘space’ engendered by cartography and literature” (6, 8). Clearly, too, maps from non-western cultures might engender or require different readings that I have suggested here. However, the possibility that the spaces of literary maps can be read in this way is not a totalising gesture since each reader, and each reader’s reading of each map, potentially explores a different path on each visit for, as Stephen Hall notes, “[o]ut of any one territory, one map, can bloom a thousand geographies” (17); there are a countless number of different paths and destinations, different spaces and ways through and across, that can be created out of any one cartographic area, be it literary or not.

As such, Watson’s “special kind of reading game” might now more usefully be identified as playing, the opening up of unbounded “visual chronotopes” that provide for a potential reading experience beyond the written word, a visual chronotope of the potential of spatiality that is not always described verbally in the narrative itself.<sup>76</sup> This playing with reading rather than a reading ‘game’ (for any conventional rules can be dispensed with by the map’s reader) creates and recreates spaces in that such maps exhibit an open-endedness that cannot be completely reduced to the intent or spatial ideology of whoever originates them in the first instance, nor to the individual nature of the texts they accompany.<sup>77</sup> Thus, such maps can be both instances of potential thirdspace in themselves and, at the same time, open up the potential for readers to play with the space available in creating their own versions of the space, a process through which the spatial imaginary can be exercised in a variety of playful ways.

### *The Text in Play*

Not all fantasy narratives are accompanied by maps, of course, but what I have suggested about the possibilities opened up by the visual representation of space through literary maps can also be seen to parallel instances of reading about fantasy spaces in novels. In the previous two chapters, I discussed texts on the basis of an implicit understanding of the manipulation of the spatial that was being made or not by the author. As with any other feature of the text, there is no reason not to think that there are implied values and ideologies in an author's choice as to setting and how it is used by author and protagonist(s). If space is an insistent element of story, then the way space is shown to operate and the way space is operated upon must surely also encode some ideological nuance. Although "[t]he literary convention of fantasy is not chained to any specific ideology" (Oziewicz and Hade 43), any ideology lacks substance, says Lefebvre, "without a space to which it refers, a space it describes, whose vocabulary [...] it makes use of, and whose code it embodies" (44). Thus, there is always a need to have some consideration of the authorial position and how it operates.

However, as I noted briefly in Chapter One, to take a view that focuses on the author as originator and the sole controller of textual space such that texts are seen as "the site of adult re-creation of an earlier geography" (Lundin 166), is to focus too heavily on the author as maker. It may be true that "[t]he locales of many children's books are the enshrouded landscapes of childhood re-made, re-visited" (Lundin 166) but, as my earlier discussion of literary maps showed, it is important not to over-emphasise the power of the author in terms of how spatiality is re-visited by readers. Seeing the creation of fantasy worlds as adult authors simply "indulging in the escapist pleasure of constructing nostalgic

worlds for fictional children” through which authors can “indulge in imaginary escapes from ‘real,’ civilized, urban(e) disconnected experiences though fictional child-hosts” (Honeyman 131, 117) removes the focus on the differences similarities between the fictional world and the consensus reality of the reader and, therefore, on the reader’s interpretation of the spatial in the text.

Certainly, in terms of authorial intent, it is possible that “adult writers create fictional spaces based on their presumptions about what young readers need and what they are interested in” (Hodges et al 195), but taking this notion at its simplest belittles the capacity of the reader. There is no guarantee that a child reader has any less understanding of the spatial:

The child’s world is smaller than the grownup’s; but are we so sure that it is shallower? Measured by whose plumbline? Is it not safer to say that, until the child begins to merge into the adolescent, his mental world, though of course in many respects akin to that of his elders, in many others obeys its own private laws of motion? (Fadiman 16)

These “private laws of motion” are not necessarily inferior to those of the adult (and quite the reverse is probably the case) and, consequently, even if the point is accepted that spatial depictions rest solely on how authors might envisage the capabilities of their potential readers, this does not in itself hand the whole process of spatial imagining over to authorial control because, in tandem with the constructs of the author, readers can still read *as if* the worlds were real, and they can make of them their own constructions and employ their own narrative schema when doing so.

Although the author in the text initially makes the territory, the reader in the text can also remake it in that, the textual worlds and spaces similarly offer “fictional worlds in which all indications of distance, capacity or arrangement are generated in accordance with self-contained assumptions, game like rules that are

experienced as axioms” (Wilson, “Metamorphoses” 217). Whilst what any particular reader will take from (and bring to) a text is all but impossible to know, it is clear that, in some way, the spaces of these uniquely drawn worlds are pictured in readers’ minds. Research has shown, for instance, that “[r]eaders report that they construct visual images of the scenes being described in stories. They say they use the text to construct and enact a play in the theater of their mind’s eye” (Black and Bower 247). If this constructive activity is the case, then whether or not “writers create fictional space based on their beliefs about children’s cognitive ability, their audience’s comprehension,” and that they therefore “offer spaces that are less complex and challenging than children encounter in their real lives” (Hodges et al. 195) is largely immaterial.

As I noted earlier, even the simplest map can open up spaces in the mind of a reader and, as Jerry Griswold comments, it is an oversimplification to “take the high ground and smugly dismiss the ways the young think as mistaken and immature simply because they have yet to accept our own adult—no-nonsense worldview” (124). Indeed, Watson has described the interaction between text and reader as “the imaginative creation of a cultural space, in which writers find a way of exploring what they want to say to—and about—children: an area in which children and adults can engage in various kinds of dynamic discourse,” although he also notes that “the possibilities may not be realised” (“Possibilities” 11, 22). This dynamic discourse, however it is construed, must surely speak to something that is close to a meeting of equals rather than being simply a hierarchically situated speaking down to the reader.

Indeed, in respect of the nature of the play of discourse, it is more likely that what is being evidenced is what Foucault terms “subjugated knowledges,”

by which he means “an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production,” one whose validity “is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought” (“Two” 81). These are knowledges which are “disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (“Two” 81–2). This surely applies to the “knowledges” of children as much as to the huddled, adult masses. Subjugated does not mean naive or inferior, however, especially when considering spatial awareness, for the realms of spatial knowledge are intangible and able to operate in and on places, slipping free from the kinds of movement that was originally intended.

This possibility of slipping free suggests that the constructive and imaginative recreation of spaces speaks to how a text can be seen as “a game to be played between an author and a reader” (Wilson, *Palamedes*’ 14). Drawing on ideas from Winnicott, William Touponce also notes that it is possible to see the text as “a transitional object, a space in which meaning—and the self, semiotically conceived—plays,” and that the space where reader text and author interact is one that is “not quite the world and not entirely the self” (187). Talking of the reading process, Certeau suggests that, “[t]he thin film of writing becomes a movement of strata, a play of spaces” (xxi) and, by bringing the reader into the constructive equation, whether intentionally on the part of the author or not, the ground is set for a contestation of space with the reader, a contestation that is, in effect, an instance of playing together in a new space. It is also an activity that takes place on an equal playing field for, as Donnarae MacCann suggests,

[b]y the time a child has reached the age of seven or eight, he has gained sufficient mastery of the real world, and sufficient mastery of his native tongue in particular, to enjoy the playful manipulation that literary fantasies provide. (135)

Thus, the child reader need not necessarily be seen as the inferior party in the activity.

This possibility is even more the case with the fantasy novel for, in spatial terms, it can be seen as an extension of playing, formulated and elaborated in written form, and which is taken by the reader as a basis for something more that can cross the boundaries between the text and the world of the reader. In effect, each fantasy ‘other world’ text is a potential thirdspace in itself, an invitation “to play in the space of the altogether and in-between, in the space of the hyphen that both connects things and separates them at the same time” (Lunt 70), for every text is the basis for a combination of elements from the author, the real of the reader’s consensus reality and what the reader brings to the text in terms of spatial awareness, and an imagined new space that is not necessarily how the author envisaged the text world to be.

### ***Traversing Worlds—Familiar or Strange***

This playful negotiation between author and reader also points to a connection between the ‘real’ world of consensus reality and the world spaces in books, and how readers might negotiate the two, even though, in narrative theory, there is a consistent notion of the “sacred frontier between the two worlds,” one being “the world in which one tells,” and the other being “the world of which one tells” (Genette, *Narrative* 236). It is a fixed frontier and, as Bakhtin argues, “we must never confuse—as has been done up to now and as is still often done—the represented world with the world outside the text (“Form” 253), for there is, it seems, a “never eliminable gap between extraliterary reality and the fictional reality of the realistic frame segments” (Gilead 289).

This perceived danger of conflating the world of consensus reality should pose no problem in the case of fantasy ‘other world’ fiction since, as Brian Attebery pointedly remarks, “[a] magical world cannot be confused with real life” (128). Logically, this would make sense given that the very features that identify fantasy as such—its very differentness and strangeness from the real of consensus reality—show clearly that “it not only is imaginative but is in some way or other ‘not of this world’,” so different that “a distinction should be drawn between the literature of fantasy and fiction” (Morris 77), at least from one perspective.

For child readers, however, the distinction may not be so clear. Witness for example the author Jane Yolen who discusses the fact that adults have full knowledge of the fantasy conventions that show clearly that “this is not the real world we are talking of, this is a faerie land, a make-believe,” whilst child readers are confused, she says, they “do not always understand the convention,” and so they “write to Maurice Sendak and ask for directions to the place where the wild things are. To them Narnia, Middle Earth and the Land Beneath the Waves are as real—indeed often more real—than the every day” (89). Yolen’s remarks seem to suggest that children can be duped into taking the unreal for real, suggesting that young readers lack the ability to suspend disbelief.

However, it is not necessarily the case that suspension of disbelief is really the process in operation when readers turn the pages of a fantasy ‘other world’ novel. As Sarah Worth astutely points out,

[w]hen we enter into a fictional world, or let the fictional world enter into our imaginations, we do not “willingly suspend our disbelief.” I cannot willingly decide to believe or disbelieve anything. (447)

Indeed, research with young children on the development of the fantasy/reality distinction, for example, has found that, “children seem to place fantastical entities in a separate category—neither unquestionably real nor pretend, but somewhere in between,” and they conclude that, “rather than having misplaced the boundary between real and fantastical entities, young children are still in the process of actively constructing it” (Sharon and Woolley 308). Children, it seems, have a more profound understanding of what is happening than might be thought, but what might that understanding be?

More than one critic has noted that, “[w]hen we read literature we journey into an imaginary land, while at the same time remaining home” (Schwarz 218). Margaret Meek Spencer has suggested that “[w]hen we read we seem to be, at first, on the margins of both worlds, for we take the world we know into the narrative,” and she also notes that “[y]oung readers cross the boundaries of both reality and make-believe to bring different kinds of order into their thinking” (130) such that the reading process, in a sense, combines the real and the imagined. Indeed, despite Bakhtin’s warning against conflating fiction and reality, he does also note the reciprocity of text and ‘real’ world when he suggests that

[t]he work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers. (“Form” 254)

This notion of a reciprocal relationship between text world and consensus reality is echoed by Deleuze and Guattari when they suggest that, “contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world;” instead, they say,

[i]t forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization



of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). (*Plateaus* 11)

This connection between book and world can only be mediated, of course, by and through the reading process, and thus through the reader, and it is the perception of the reader's imaginative capacity that must take prominence.

Doležel claims that “[a]n actual reader can ‘observe’ fictional worlds and make them a source of his experience, just as he observes and experientially appropriates the actual world” (“Mimesis” 485). The reader's mental representations construct a text world for, “[w]hen engaging with fiction, I do not *suspend a critical faculty*, but rather I *exercise a creative faculty*. I do not actively suspend disbelief—I actively create belief” (Worth 447, original emphasis). Moreover, as Worth continues, this process actively reinforces the nature of the experience of encountering such spaces for

[a]s we learn to enter into fictional spaces [...] I can focus my attention on the enveloping world, and I use my creative faculties to reinforce the reality of the experience, rather than to question it. (447)

Indeed, Gavins talks of the mental models, or text worlds, that individuals create when reading and observes that

[o]ur experience of these worlds can be as real to us as our experience of the everyday world in which we live. The feeling of being so immersed in a text-world as almost to lose sense of who and where we are is familiar to just about anyone who has ever read a novel. (10)

This active and constructive process suggest that, rather than fantasy texts being those where, as Nikolajeva argues, “the reader is *outside* the secondary world” (*Magic* 37, original emphasis), the reader is, in fact, always inside the text as a part of the constructive process.

As Certeau puts it, “[a] different world (the reader’s) slips into the author’s place” (xxi), and, “[t]his mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person’s property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient” (xxi). As with the case of literary maps, this argues for the play that occurs between author and reader in fiction producing a repositioning of author and reader into a re-centred reality. Fictionality becomes not simply a property of the text, but rather a position that readers take up. Lynne Rosenthal’s notion of a “fourth” dimension, therefore, where readers can “transcend the strict coordinates of the literal world, in order to experience an equally authentic dimension,” reconciling the imagination with the rational “in an integrated self-structure,” brings the process back to the notion of a constructed thirdspace.<sup>78</sup> It is a thirdspace where “[t]he imaginary world does unfold under its own power, but only with my (implicit) permission, only because I allow it to do so” (Walton 16), which places it in the domain of the reader.

On this basis, if it is possible to see the lived world as discursively and creatively constructed, then what ontological difference exists for the reader between the constructed world(s) of consensus reality, the constructed world the author places the characters in, and the reconstruction of that world by the reader who slips into the author’s place? Moreover, if it is the case that propositions about the world “are not true or false in a simple objective sense; they are more true if we believe and act upon them, and more false if we disbelieve them,” and thus [t]heir validity is a function of our belief” (Ruesch and Bateson 217), then what is fiction and what is non-fiction “become distinguishable on the basis of the stance adopted to given information” (Goldman 27) by the reader. What is

fantasy, real or unreal, therefore, is bound to “the expectations of both character in the text and reader outside the text toward what is real and what is fantastic” (Northrup 814), and real and fantasy themselves are always contingent and unfixed.

In terms of the expectations of the reader when encountering a fantasy space in a text, “the principle of minimal departure” argues that readers start “processing a text with the assumption that its textual world has an identity with the actual world until they are presented with information to the contrary” (Gavins 12). The necessary textual markers should, therefore, mark the text as strange and not of the reader’s world. Indeed, Armitte asserts that “defamiliarization techniques are the presiding characteristic of all fantasy forms” (*Theorising* 25), and this defamiliarisation or encounter with the strange and unfamiliar is placed before the reader as a clear marker.

In the case of ‘other world’ fantasy for children, this does not seem to operate, however, and the principle of minimal departure is not troubled when one considers the reaction of protagonists to the spaces they enter. Rather than expressions of shock or dismay, as a rule, when child protagonists enter an ‘other’ world, be it safe or dangerous, they are rarely depicted as being either distraught at the separation, or as experiencing any of “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg 177). Certainly, when characters move from other worlds into consensus reality, the reverse can be true (as was seen in the case of Lyra in *The Subtle Knife*).<sup>79</sup> However, when protagonists move from consensus reality into the new space, there is usually no obvious sense of alienation or concern at the sight of what should be the wholly unfamiliar, and there is rarely, what Tolkien refers to as an

“arresting strangeness” (47–8), nor a feeling of being ‘out of place’ in the different world. Instead, the characters, just as those in fairy tales, do not hesitate between the “two possibilities” (Todorov 26) of the real and the fantastic; they accept each equally.

This absence of concern seems to be something of an anomaly since one’s home culture helps to form identity by providing social and cultural cues, cues that can take different forms.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, when an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed, and what should ensue is the sense of culture shock. Indeed, as Nesbit suggests,

[i]t is a mistake to suppose that children are naturally fond of change. They love what they know. In strange places they suffer violently from homesickness, even when their loved nurse or mother is with them. They want to get back to the house they know, the toys they know, the books they know. (39)

In such situations, the expectation would surely be that, in addition to a physical and geographical displacement, child protagonists would be no different from real children; they would experience a cultural displacement, and the encounter with the supposedly unfamiliar would bring with it an overwhelming sense of loss at being away from the familiar setting (even if it is a setting which is constraining and lacking freedom), together with an additional sense of lack of control in terms of being able to adjust to, or manipulate, the new landscape. In theory, then, child protagonists, removed from the everyday and thrust into the strange, ought to feel this sense of loss more intensely, and yet the sense of culture shock is generally not present.

Although the other world spaces are rarely of a kind that would be called perfect, like the fairy tale hero who “does not experience wonder when confronted with magical events or beings; they are taken for a granted”

(Nikolajeva, "Fairy" 154), by and large, the child protagonists simply accept the new space as a part of the normal. In a way, this seems to coincide closely with Bakhtin's suggestion of the chronotope of the road. Despite Bakhtin's description of this chronotope as closely matching the ideas of home-away-home and maturation in that "setting out on the road from one's birthplace, returning home, are usually plateaus of *age* in the life of the individual" ("Forms" 120, original emphasis), more importantly Bakhtin notes that the "one crucial feature" of this chronotope is that "the road is always one that passes through *familiar territory*, and not through some exotic *alien world*" ("Forms" 245, original emphasis). As with Max in *Where the Wild Things Are*, or even the Pevensies and other children in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, protagonists automatically feel 'at home' in the new space, regardless of the level of menace they encounter, and it is generally the case that, rather than any culture shock occurring, there is an immediate cognitive and experiential assimilation of space by the child protagonists: Max becomes king of the wild things, the Pevensies become kings and queens of Narnia.

Given what I have noted is a varying level of spatial access in texts, this lack of culture shock on the part of protagonist's can operate in two ways when considering children's novels depicting 'other worlds.' One of these ways follows the conservative line. Here, if children's books can be said to represent adults' fantasised view of children and childhood, then 'other' world fantasy novels might be accounted for by arguing that all children's books simply represent an adult's romantic, nostalgic view of children and childhood. This would position children as being in some way already close to the fantastic such that child protagonists will not be perturbed when they find themselves in what

would otherwise be seen as a strange and unfamiliar place. In fact, Grenby refers to the lack of culture shock in most texts as “a surprising sang-froid” (151), but why should it be so surprising unless one subscribes to the view that this absence of culture shock represents the figure of the child and childhood as “closer to nature and the primitive world, more fluid in its identity and its access to the realms of the imagination” (Jenkins 4)? This is a position that assumes that adult authors imagine children and childhood as being in some way ‘at one’ with the fantasy genre, and that it is this natural affinity that explains why so many narratives show child protagonists who unhesitatingly and completely accept what might otherwise be seen as the ‘strangeness’ of fantasy ‘other’ worlds. It also rests on the constructed child figure that Jacqueline Rose asserts makes children’s literature “impossible” precisely because of the “impossible relation between adult and child” (1).

However, the adult position is not necessarily the one to be adopted, especially when considering the perspective of the reader simply because, “[w]hile many adult readers undoubtedly perceive such moments as uncanny, children are theoretically less sensitive to them” (Gooding 394). In this case, the lack of culture shock can be seen to take on an alternative function for the reader. It can be seen as significant of the will to connect spaces—especially in more spatially active narratives, but also in those that are more inert—where the absence of reaction from child protagonists can indicate that no real change in realities has occurred, and thus it can be a marker of the movement into thirdspace.

Whether authors intend it to happen or not, their reliance on this mechanism as a traditional trope gives a clear indication to readers of a spatial

contiguity. A consequence of this perception of contiguity is that even texts which ultimately try to work in favour of the spatial status quo, the defined and delimited, are apt to undermine themselves. This is so because, regardless of the indeterminable level of identification between reader and protagonist, the understanding of the nature of the spatial that is in play supersedes other considerations in that readers can always relate to the potential for movement within an individual spatial because that is also a real possibility in their lived lives.

### *Spaces of Lived Lives*

It should be possible to see how readers and texts work together in spatial terms to produce social outcomes in lived lives. Readers inhabit consensus reality but, as I have already discussed, consensus reality is not so much a consensus as a conglomeration of perspectives of reality. The presence of this conglomeration is why, for Malpas, “a sense of place consists in having a grasp of a conceptually complex structure—a structure that encompasses different forms of spatiality, concepts of self, of others and of an objective order of things” (152). In the very complexity of this understanding, the opportunities for children to participate in the process of gaining a sense of place would seem to be limited. Indeed, although as I have already noted, children’s understandings of their positions within the world should not be underestimated, a common view, as Allison James notes, is that

[c]hildhood is a social space that is structurally determined by a range of social institutions, but, precisely because of this, children as subjects are also structurally and culturally determined as social actors with specific social roles to play, as children. (“Giving” 270)

In turn, this understanding of the figure of the child suggests that children have no agency, and nor are they given the space and “ability to imagine a world differently and then act differently” (Chappell 282). In this model, what adults do is to create an image of children which presupposes that “children cannot know themselves or what is good for them, and so they need *us*, need our guidance and protection” (Owen 256, original emphasis), and thus “adults almost always see the importance of creating spaces for young people but are often loath to let them do so themselves” (Aitken 167). This level of adult control identifies the child’s space in the world as defined and restricted within adult parameters, and yet it is also true that “the ways in which children inhabit and experience those common spaces can, nonetheless, differ sharply” (A. James, “Giving” 266) because the spatial, especially the spatial in play, is a freedom that each individual can potentially exercise at any time.

The urge to use and create spaces is something that emerges early in childhood. Children of four or five years old “seem to have no need for a specific place; the preoperational mind’s egocentrism allows ‘my space’ to be any space, and distance from adults is achieved imaginatively rather than physically” (Sturm et al. 84). Within this understanding, the spatial imagination plays an important role in the way children consider themselves and, regardless of the social places set out for children—the adult designed and constructed playgrounds, for example, with their safe “child friendly” surfaces and ready-made constructions, much like toys, to play on or with—they can also create their own versions of those places:

Young people find and make spaces beyond the surveillance of the adult world, often on the edges of neighborhoods, where they improvise and practice their relationships in forms of play, in the process creating local cultures of childhood. (Cook 150)



In so doing, as Toni Derr observes, “children shape their own place experiences” (108), and this is important because “children are and must be seen as active in the construction of their own lives” (James and Prout 8). This shaping is both through a sense of exploration, or by finding a special, private place that is unknown to others for, “the spontaneous aspect of exploration, whether in places close to home or far away, in nature or cities, is one of the most significant for children” (Derr 112) in that it gives them agency over their spatial activities.

Thomson and Philo, for example, found from their research that children do not locate the spaces of play “straightforwardly in spaces that adults might conceive of as ones *for* children’s play” (16, original emphasis), that is in the structured environments that adults set up to allow for play. Other research also suggests that

it is not necessarily the officially designated “places for children” that appeal so much as the “children’s places” they make their own. These might be particular corners of official play spaces or tucked-away spaces which adults might not even notice. (Scourfeld et al. 85)

This use of space by children in real world locations is not particularly different from the presentation of spaces in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction. Indeed, Manlove has also pointed to this possibility in his suggestion that

[t]he playfulness, the skill in making a believable fantastic world out of the most diverse images, is a key part of much English children’s fantasy—and fittingly, because play, and play with reality, is what children seem to understand with their own games of make-believe. (*Alice* 194)

This connection between the play of spaces in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction and the spaces of playing that children engender in quotidian reality is no arbitrary coincidence.

Thirdspace is very much a private or secret space that often does not involve the presence of adults (at least not adults from the world of consensus reality). In such secret spaces, “children feel both connected (internally to place and self) and disconnected (externally from rules, adults, and daily routines), and they are able to observe the world without being observed. (Sturm et al. 84). As a result of the way children understand their own spaces,

[w]hile adults remain fascinated with secret places—hence the profusion of these places in children’s literature written by them—playing in them is primarily the purview of childhood and early adolescence. (Sturm et al. 84)

This process is no less likely to occur in children and, in its effects, it produces worlds within worlds. Grete Lillehammer suggests “the world of children” as a way to describe “the interconnected relationships between being children in mind and action and the diverse spheres in which children actively move” (20). Lillehammer also adds that this includes “a specifically spatial dimension of activity which distinguishes it from the concept of childhood, which is seen as passively and temporally constructed” (24). It is in the spatial that children can designate their own spaces and, therefore, have control over them over and themselves.

It is in child’s play that control of new spaces becomes possible. In society, the existence of a space or place tends to be the subjective province of adults to designate rather than being defined by children. Moreover, children are neither expected, nor allowed, to encroach upon various spaces and places in the planned and regulated places of ‘adult’ society; instead, the requirement is that they remain within designated spaces, forcing them to find their secret spaces to play in by recreating and remaking existing places. Conversely, in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, child characters can be allowed the opportunity to play within

spaces that, in their nature as not real, operate as secret spaces. The creation of such spaces, especially when they are more open and dynamic and, therefore, less under the control of adults, can empower the creation of children's own spaces through their own narratives in playing. As a result, it is possible to see that "places in narrative have force and meaning; they are related to human values and beliefs; and they are part of a larger human world, including actions and events" (Kort, *Place* 11) and this larger human world includes the child.

Although it is probably true that "[o]ne cannot read 'through' a text to the world: that is simply the illusion of realism" (Banting 27), Frank Kermode points to an obvious relationship between such fictions of the everyday such as those that children create for themselves and literary fictions (36), and he sees the novel, therefore, as giving the reader an opportunity to relate to a situation "as if" it were real, producing a "novel-shaped account of the world" (143). Moreover, this view is possible, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, even when the spaces presented are ultimately closed for protagonists, something which can be examined further by considering a text that is not itself an 'other' world fantasy novel at all, but is one that serves to illustrate a number of points I have been making thus far: Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*.

### ***Building Bridges in Katherine Paterson's Bridge to Terabithia***

Although it might seem somewhat circular to use one novel to discuss others, especially when they emerge from different genres, the events that unfold in what is a realist novel in the conventional sense, means that it can offer a particularly apt commentary on what I have been discussing in this chapter and earlier ones too. This is because Paterson's novel narrates the story of two young children at play, creating a thirdspace of their own within consensus reality.

The narrative revolves around two ten year olds, Jess Aarons and Leslie Burke (whose family has just moved from the city to live in the countryside). Although new at the school in rural Lark Creek, Leslie beats the boys in a running race—a regular, usually all-boy, break-time activity—thereby disappointing Jess, who had hoped to prove himself the fastest runner in school. Running is important for Jess, for it seems to offer a release from his constricted and confined life; apart from the restricting space of school—described as “a dirty old cage” (15)—he has to share a bedroom on the farm with his two younger sisters, and he has to spend his time doing farmyard chores because his father has to go away to work to increase the family’s income. The only outlet Jess has apart from running (the desire for freedom of movement) is drawing (indicating a propensity for the imaginative and creative).

Despite Jess losing the running race to Leslie, however, the two become firm friends and, one day after school, Leslie and Jess wander off “over the empty field behind the old Perkins place and down to the dry creek bed that separated farmland from the woods” (49). Here, Leslie makes a suggestion:

“We need a place,” she said, “just for us. It would be so secret that we would never tell anyone in the whole world about it.” (49)

This will be a space of their own making, and one that they will take ownership of for, as Leslie continues,

“[i]t might be a whole secret country [...], and you and I would be the rulers of it.” (49–50)

The special nature of the new space is indicated by the method of getting to it: a rope swing across a creek. Their first efforts to swing across to the forest on the other side are unsuccessful. In fact, because the gully is dry at this time of year, it could be crossed relatively easily on foot, yet Jess “couldn’t escape the feeling

that one must enter Terabithia only by the prescribed entrance” (76). This thirdspace, however, draws not only on an inherent capacity for space-making, but also upon the potential inherent in a fantasy ‘other world’ text since, as Leslie suggests,

“it could be like Narnia, and the only way you can get in is by swinging across on the enchanted rope.” (50)

Even the spatially restricted *Chronicles of Narnia*, it appears, can provide the impetus for a more open kind of spatial creativity. In fact, “Leslie named their secret land ‘Terabithia,’ and she loaned Jess all of her books about Narnia, so he would know how things went in a magic kingdom” (51). This use of a textual source as an inspiration is not, however, simply an imitative process; Leslie is not just trying to recreate Narnia in the woods of Lark Creek.

They build in the land of Terabithia, but they do not construct a house, for this is not a recreated domestic scene. Instead, they build a “castle stronghold” to defend the land against enemies, to protect it as their own:

They dragged boards and other materials down from the scrap heap by Miss Bessie’s pasture and built their castle stronghold in the place they had found in the woods. (51)

Of course, this castle stronghold is, simultaneously, a shack, and when it rains, the castle/shack leaks water in “icy streams” that Jess tries to avoid but finds “there was no escaping the miserable invaders” (115). Here, however, the text reveals that the rain is both mundane and real and yet, at the same time, it is personified and a part of the imagined, so much so that Leslie believes that it is a curse on the land: “Methinks some evil being has put a curse on our beloved kingdom” (116). This idea is also found in the way the pine grove that the children discover in the woods is both a pine grove and a sacred grove of Terabithia without any additional act of construction other than the combination

of the real and imagined. Clearly, consensus reality still exists, and it has not been subverted or undermined in any way. However, Jess and Leslie have taken the wooded area and made a thirdspace of it for themselves, one that is simultaneously real and imagined and more for, as Leslie says, “This is not an ordinary place” (60).

Once their creative work is completed, “Like God in the Bible, they looked at what they had made and found it very good” (51). It is not coincidental that the children are considered godlike in their ability to create their own space, for not only have they created the space, but they also assume ownership of it, and “between the two of them they owned the world” (52). The castle stronghold they have built defends them against intrusion because Terabithia is “just for the two of them” (89), and consensus reality is considered “their former world” (60).

Terabithia is also a thirdspace that is fully experienced. Whilst the narrative tells nothing of how Leslie experientially understands the thirdspace (and rightly so since her capacity for space-making would seem to be a given), how Jess experiences it is a large part of the way the novel develops an understanding of the spatial:

Just walking down the hill towards the woods made something warm and liquid steal through his body. The closer he came to the dry creek bed and the crab apple tree rope the more he could feel the beating of his heart. He grabbed the end of the rope and swung out toward the other bank with a kind of wild exhilaration and landed on his feet, taller and stronger and wiser in that mysterious land. (59)

The change from poor boy to king comes at that moment of movement through the air on the end of the rope. It is a moment of transition that does not take Jess wholly out of consensus reality but which, at the same time, allows him into another spatiality. However, although Jess is able to experience it, throughout

most of the novel it seems that his sense that he cannot create the space for himself is to the fore.

This apparent inability to create space for himself is something that is understood about Jess early in the novel when the narrator says that “Terabithia was their secret, which was a good thing, for how could Jess have explained it to an outsider?” (59). Here, the suggestion is that Jess experiences a certain awkwardness about the idea of being part of a real and imagined space, especially compared to Leslie’s total adoption of the space as lived and experienced. Indeed, for much of the novel, the thirdspace, although experienced, remains somewhat alien to Jess. Early in the novel, the narrator reveals that “Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self—his way to Terabithia and all the worlds beyond” (59), something which suggest that Jess would not have considered making such movement himself. On one occasion, when Leslie cannot come out because she is helping her father to repair their house:

Jess tried going to Terabithia alone, but it was no good. It needed Leslie to make the magic. He was afraid he would destroy everything by trying to force the magic on his own, when it was plain that the magic was reluctant to come for him. (83)

Later in the novel, when Jess considers earlier events, he still recognises Leslie’s role as guide rather than any inherent capacity he has within himself: “It was Leslie who had taken him from the cow pasture into Terabithia and turned him into a king” (160). Jess initially lacks confidence in his own ability to turn place into space.

In fact, after Leslie dies while trying to get to Terabithia, and the rope swing snaps, the stump of rope that remains seems to signify to Jess that the potential for movement into thirdspace has gone. Initially, he is downcast,

believing that it is not possible to enter Terabithia now that Leslie is not there to take him. Leslie

had made him leave his old self behind and come into her world, and then before he was really at home in it but too late to go back, she had left him stranded there—like an astronaut wandering about on the moon. Alone. (145-6)

Now, it seems that for Jess, “There was nowhere to go. Nowhere. Ever again” (147). Jess feels isolated both physically (having lost his friend) and spatially in that, whether he had fully grasped the process or not, he had been able to share in Leslie’s creation of thirdspace. Since it had been her creation, or so it seems to Jess at this time, it is no longer available to him.

This negative reaction could, of course, be proof that one must turn away from such space-making as one matures. Indeed, at one point Jess even considers the possibility that

Terabithia was like a castle where you came to be knighted. After you stayed for a while and grew strong you had to move on. For hadn’t Leslie, even in Terabithia, tried to push back the walls of his mind and make him see beyond to the shining world. (160)

The experience of death as a device that brings maturity to the protagonist should, in theory therefore, be the moment that Jess can move on in the world of consensus reality and put aside such “childish” things. However, despite his initial reaction. Jess does not move on. He first builds a temporary bridge with a broken branch and, for the first time, crosses into Terabithia on his own:

He landed slightly upstream from Terabithia. If it was still Terabithia. If it could be entered across a branch instead of swung into (151).

The earlier entrance, of course, had been the rope swing, which has now gone. However, despite his doubts about how one should enter Terabithia, this is a turning point in Jess’s understanding of the movement into thirdspace.



Jess's younger sister, May Belle (who had not been allowed to be part of the world-making early on in the novel) has followed Jess and, whilst trying to cross the branch over the creek, she gets stuck half-way across and experiences the very same kind of fear that Jess himself had experienced when, during a spell of persistent rain, the creek fills with water, and turns into "a roaring eight-foot-wide sea" (13). Jess has to rescue his sister, but this clearly sets in his mind the need for a more permanent traversal into Terabithia. He takes planks that, significantly, had been left at Leslie's old house after her parents had moved out, and he builds a more permanent crossing. It is over this solid connection between the real and the imagined that he takes May Belle,

he put flowers in her hair and led her across the bridge—the great bridge into Terabithia—which might look to someone with no magic in him like a few planks across a newly dry gully. (163)

It is now clear to see that, despite his earlier misgivings and doubts, Jess has understood the space-making potential he has, for he has built "the great bridge into Terabithia" and perceives it as such whereas, to the spatially uninitiated, all that exists are a few old planks.

The bridge thus represents not only the will to connect to thirdspace, but it is also conceived of as a permanent structure that opens up Terabithia as a thirdspace for both Jess and May Belle. It will also be available in the future for the baby, Joyce Ann, who is, as yet, too young to know enough, but who will become a future queen of this realm of thirdspace. In Jess's introduction of May Belle to the space-making imagination, just as Leslie had introduced him, Jess affirms that he is now able to actualise the space by himself; he no longer needs the imagination of Leslie to provide the entrance to the world of Terabithia. He has not "moved on" from Terabithia at all; he has understood his ability to

recreate the world for himself, and now he is able to initiate his young sisters (and, indeed, the reader) into the process.

On one level, this novel could be seen as a nostalgic idealisation of childhood, one that promises perfect world's that can provide a refuge from the responsibility of the real, adult world. In one way, of course, Terabithia does provide a refuge for Jess, a place to forget about the cramped conditions of home and the workload he is required to bear on behalf of the family. However, Leslie needs no such sanctuary. Moreover, as is proven by Leslie's death, the world of Terabithia is no Edenic safe haven.

What *Bridge to Terabithia* exemplifies is that act of playing that creates a thirdspace from the real and the imagined. It suggests that, whilst the world itself cannot be played with (it always remains as the world, it is never destroyed), what can be played with is the world in the way we experience it spatially through the creation of spaces that are simultaneously real and imagined, and by walking through those spaces and making uses of them in order to actualise them rather than maintain them only as an insubstantial fancy. The dependence that Jess has on Leslie in terms of space-making creativity also shows that, although a sense of thirdspace may be intuitively human (as typified by Leslie), its exercise may still need to be shown to people as a potential that requires actualisation; it is not a passive activity of daydreaming, but a positive, creative mental act. It is a mental act that can be stimulated by others and by texts since, although Jess's primary introduction to the creative process of space-making is Leslie, he later has access to fantasy 'other world' fiction novels. The fictional novels chosen, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, also point to a playful contestation of the spatial between the reader (here, Leslie) and the text that is in itself a creative

performance, one that is then taken as a basis for the instigation of play to produce a newly created thirdspace, that of Terabithia.

This use of the *The Chronicles of Narnia* serves to indicate that fantasy novels—even those that are not fully spatially open such as the Narnia books—can provide a stimulus to real space-making. As such, what Leslie is able to take from the texts of C. S. Lewis not only exemplifies bell hooks' contention that “[s]paces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practices” (152), but also shows that this process can operate in reverse. Indeed, Katherine Paterson herself has commented on the similarity between the name of the thirdspace of Terabithia and the island of Terebinthia in Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (156), and she has even noted how such thirdspaces come into being:

When children ask me now, “Where is Terabithia?,” I try to explain that for most of us it starts out as a place outside ourselves—a tree, a hideout in the woods, a corner of our backyards, the springhouse on our uncle's farm. (156)

Paterson's comments echo those of others I have discussed who have noted how the creative and constructive spatial imagination can make of something mundane something magical. It shows the difference between the delimited and the unbounded, and is also seen in the novel in the way spaces are marked for games, in this case, running races:

The first two out began dragging their toes to make the finish line. The ground was rutted from past rains, but had hardened in the late summer drought, so they had to give up on sneaker toes and draw the line with a stick. (30)

The ground for running is a delimited and fixed space; in effect, it is no more than a game. However, there is no such demarcation of the limits of the thirdspace of Terabithia.

As a final note, here, it is worth mentioning that, as with the film version of *Where the Wild Things Are*, Gábor Csupó's 2007 Walden Media/Walt Disney Productions film version of *Bridge to Terabithia* visually depicts the protagonists' spatial imaginary as a part of their experiential real, and also as being contiguous with consensus reality. It sees the real and imagined as one new space of its own and, whilst this is not how the book presents the thirdspace that Leslie and Jess move into, it does signal most clearly that the space of the real and imagined has substance, is not illusory or unattainable, and that it is always potentially there waiting to be created.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

When attempting to discuss what readers might do with and draw from the textual spaces they encounter, there is an obvious danger of falling into the trap of speaking *for* the child with all the concomitant problems that arise. However, the nature of the spatial is different; it is a commonality that all human beings experience, and in much the same way. Being located spatially is a fundamental aspect of human existence, for

[n]ot to be in a place is to be nowhere, and to be nowhere is to be nothing. Therefore it is a *sine qua non* of human personhood, and therefore of human being, to be in place. (Benson 10)

More than this locatedness, however, as Casey suggests “where we are—the place we occupy, however briefly—has everything to do with what and who we are (and finally, *that* we are)” (xiii, original emphasis). It is the nature of the place or space that individuals find themselves in that is important.

The problem is that society requires as a precondition for adulthood that, “if children are to reach their potential and make their contribution to humanity, they must eventually move beyond a perception of the world as they desire it to

be and accept it as it is” (Wolf 66). It is part of a process where, as children physically grow,

powerful social forces buoyed by peer and adult pressure told us (overtly or covertly) to put aside that childlike freshness and creativity. Expressions of external fantasy were generally no longer legitimized or encouraged: play became more structured and reality became secondary process oriented. (Michaelis 57)

It is also the point where Foucault’s totalising panopticon regulates and oversees the spatial practices of the individual and expects conformity to the grid-like patterns set out for everyday life. It is a scenario that requires that the imaginative capacity of the child reader be derided as inferior by a conservative and rationalist enlightenment argument that requires individuals to be “subtly socialized out of the magic, creativity, flexibility, and individuality that is play” (Michaelis 65) and, in this case specifically, spatial play. As a result, the control of what is or is not reality (and, therefore, what is or is not truth) is self-validating within a fixed system of spatial use, and those who are positioned so as to be able to decide what ‘reality’ is are able to control how others behave within that reality.

However, “the utility of the reductive worldview adults have settled upon is no guarantee of its veracity” (Griswold 124) and, whilst it may seek to delimit and define certain spatially creative and imaginative processes as childlike (if not childish), as Michaelis notes, everyone has “the potential for creative, playful independence” (65). There is a need to not only recognise but foster this potential because, “[r]ealism may be necessary to survival, but unless people are also touched by fantasy, they risk imprisonment in their own narrow worlds” (Tuan, “Realism” 435). Fantasy ‘other world’ fiction, therefore, offers a way to re-interpret and translate the dominant conceptions of location and emplacement

and thus, as Aitken argues, it is necessary to abandon “the notion that in the passage from childhood to adulthood there is some irretrievable loss” (2), for it need not necessarily be the case.

What individuals, adult or child, do lose when they allow themselves to be tied down, restricted, or limited in their use of the tactics of space-making, however, is the power to move throughout the range of potential spaces by practising places for themselves. If it is true that “where I find myself implaced influences not just the fact of my being but also its nature” (Benson 4), then access to the spatial is an important factor in defining who an individual is, and what that individual can do.

When opportunities to explore and act in public spaces are closed down, one of the few avenues still open is the realisation that opportunities for movement and actualisation of new spatial practices still exist and should still be pursued. It is in the fantasy ‘other world’ novel, however it resolves itself, and however formulaic it might be at times, that this potential still exists, as a reminder that spaces can still be opened up, that they are not forever lost with the passing of time as they turn into places, and that they can be created and recreated over and again. Perhaps it is not so coincidental that, just as a mass of the population began moving from the openness of the countryside into the regimented streets and alleyways of an industrial, urban environment, fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children begins to flourish since, consciously or not, it can be read as opening up the possibility for creative space-making as an antidote to the strictures of place that come with urban existence by showing that people are able to constantly reconfigure physical spaces and reinterpret them as spaces

for their own use as an exercise in agency that unfolds and authors the spaces of lived lives.

For young readers, this capacity is arguably even more the case in a modern world that, in addition to the written word, offers so many visual images through television films and the kind of electronic games that require traversals of landscapes. All of this input can only add to the potential for children's imaginary play and their creation of the necessary spaces in which to play. In such a circulating mix of real and imagined images, fantasy and the imagination that engenders it are not, therefore, the antithesis of social reality for, "although 'realism' and 'fantasy' have clear and opposite meanings conceptually, their application to real-life situations is often ambiguous and problematical," and thus "we would do well to hesitate before placing people or a cultural manifestation in the camp of realism or of fantasy" (Tuan, "Realism" 435). Indeed, as Arjun Appadurai suggests, "the deterritorialization of persons, images, and ideas," where people "see their lives through the prisms of possible lives offered by the mass media in all their forms," now means that fantasy in general is "a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies" (53–4), and it does so constructively.

Children's fantasy other world fiction, therefore, can show spaces that operate as largely oblivious to the spaces of the adult world although it is never totally separated from them. Moreover, fantasy as a social practice is not a whimsical or fanciful affair, and nor is it a process of subversion, of attempting to break down the rules of the adult world; it is simply operating with and within those rules as part of agentic action in individual spatial domains, and "agency, in the end, is an attribute of individual children. It is something which they may

or may not choose to exercise” (A. James, “Agency” 44). When they do exercise such agency, however, it is a matter of escaping without leaving in the form of “contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power,” and which thus have no “points where one can take hold of them” (Certeau 95). In this respect, Certeau argues that a story is “delinquent” in that it operates “not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces” and because it works to reject social positions that delimit and define the possibilities for movement. As Certeau says, it is

flexible enough to allow the proliferation of this challenging mobility that does not respect places, is alternately playful and threatening, and extends from the microbe-like forms of everyday narration to the carnivalesque celebrations of earlier days. (136)

If all stories have this potential, then those that offer the spatial more explicitly, as in the case of ‘other world fantasy texts, can be no less delinquent; they also work within and between places and, in their suggestion of the potential for mobility, they emphasise the inherent instability of those places.

However, this does not mean that they are indicative of subversion because, as Oakes notes, it is not a question of “disempowered groups resisting in various ways the dominant meanings and representations of the places in which they live and work” because this “assumes a limited conception of place, defined merely in terms of oppositional and contested readings of dominant representations” (524). Instead, the literary spatial can open up new ways to see the potential everyday spatiality of lived lives, which can be the case, moreover, even when texts in themselves serve to close down spaces for their protagonist. It is in the multiplicity of relationships between the spatial practices of all the different users of space that might ensue that the impossibility of ever totally including, excluding, or controlling all human activity and thought lies, for “[i]t



can be relatively easy to knock down a building, but it is much harder to demolish a space which is composed around memory, experience or imagination” (Tonkiss 3). Space making, as Certeau points out, has “no readable identity” and the created spaces exist “without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency,” making them “impossible to administer” (95). This inability to take a superior level of control over spaces, in turn, makes it impossible to fix all of the possible subject positions that are spatially available, both within the worlds of texts, and within the world of consensus reality.

As such, these texts can answer a particularly pertinent question: “Can children become narrators of their own lives, or are they fated simply to occupy narratives already written for them?” (Wood 238). In reply to this query, it is possible to see that fantasy ‘other world’ texts can show that there is always space, at all levels of society, for tangential thought and action directed towards the development of a different pragmatics of existence that is spatially based, all of which allows for the freedom of spatial agency. Children can be authors of their own spaces.

This spatial awareness is not about a nostalgic glance to the past, nor is about a hypothetical future; rather, it concerns itself with the present and the presences of individuals. Whilst it may indeed be the case that authors can never, “inhabit the presentness of childhood” (Hollindale 22), they can inhabit the presentness of the spatial when they offer texts that show most clearly the potential for space-making that exists in the world. In many areas, child readers cannot bring to the reading process the kind of prior knowledge or cultural

context that adults can. This absence of a schema is not the case for the spatial, however, for as Deleuze has observed,

[t]here is never a moment when children are not already plunged into an actual milieu in which they are moving about, and in which the parents as persons simply play the roles of openers or closers of doors, guardians of thresholds, connectors or disconnectors of zones. (*Essays* 62)

Thus, regardless of the way that authors present the spatial—as inert or active—children’s fantasy ‘other world’ novels can both suggest the potential of the spatial as well as reflecting the possibilities of space-making in the real world of the reader as something that readers can intimately connect with.

Moreover, even though fantasy ‘other world’ texts primarily value instances of children creating their own spaces (or at least moving within spaces that become available to them), they suggest to readers of any age that they might also have power over themselves, over their surroundings and over the places and spaces they inhabit. In turn, this denial of an age bracket casts the spatial as one of the ways that can achieve a more equivocal position in terms of the reader, and it does so, as Reimer suggests, “by refusing to use *child* and *adult* as unmarked terms in their analysis of reading positions—by making them strange” (Reimer 8, original emphasis). It is a notion that interleaves with the way postmodern childhood studies views childhood not as a journey towards adult completeness, but rather in a way that sees childhood as a presentness, thus “blurring the line between childhood as an unfinished and adulthood as a finished state” (Walkerdine 96). The spatial, therefore, does not impress itself on one particular type of reader, be that implied, real or any other kind or physical age.

Ultimately, therefore, the idea that “children’s literature criticism cannot move away from its many and varied versions of the ‘real child’” (Lesnik-

Oberstein 168) should not be taken as a criticism of children's literature, but as a celebration of the multiplicity of positions that different readers (which includes the 'real adult') can make and take. By showing that the spatial can be more than Cartesian fixedness, that it is an ideological construction, allows for movement within it, movement that can be playful and paradoxical and individually experienced. It also argues that those texts which fully represent the creative act of space-making cannot be seen as merely marking 'traces' of movement, but that they should be more clearly seen as maps and as setting out itineraries that can be performatively played out.

It is axiomatic that the part of life that is termed 'childhood' is a time of complex changes in an individual, when children are seeking to define both their own identity in the face of what they are told to be, and their place in the social pattern. When authors of fantasy 'other world' fiction create new spaces, new versions of the real, they can offer readers of all ages, and in varying degrees, an opportunity to experience revisioned spaces, and to create them and move within them by themselves. The meanings that emerge from the experiencing of those spaces can, if actualised by readers, lead to a different understanding of reality, for readers can see in the mix of created and real spaces that neither has to be the ultimate and fixed space of lived lives. In this understanding of spaces, there is an intimate connection between the literary and the social.

Whilst fantasy 'other world' fiction cannot directly free children (or adults) from their social and political limitations and restrictions, it can show ways through and around and across that do not necessarily mean that all movement and spatial ownership must be prescribed and controlled by others. It can point to how each person has access to an indeterminate map without

borders, the spaces of which are available to be explored, a view that sees both the child protagonists and the real child reader as being “the-child-as-capable-and-seeking-connection” (Dresang 57). It is, therefore, about the distinction between directing children (or, indeed, adults), “telling children what to *do*—what we *want* from them in terms of asking for something—and the kinds of telling that construct *who they are* or *who they should be*” (Owen 267, original emphasis). It is the difference between wishing for the possible and actualising the virtual. Finally, it is the difference between being given a place in the world to occupy (and choosing to stay put), or having the freedom to make spaces of one’s own to inhabit and play both with and within.

## Conclusion

“There are many, many worlds,” says the character Dustfinger in Cornelia Funke’s *Inkspell* (2005), “they’re all different, and they’re written down in books!” (285). In one form or another, imaginary narrative spaces have long been an integral part of the story-telling repertoire, and fantasy fiction for children relies just as much upon there being spaces for protagonists to move within as it does on all of the other narrative elements that go into making a well told fantasy tale. As Owain Jones argues, however, “[t]he stories of childhood that adult societies have told have often been about trying to write (right) childhood into one form of space or other” (196) and this is no different in the case of the fictional ‘stories’ of childhood in children’s literature.

In this thesis, therefore, I have attempted to examine a wide range of fantasy ‘other world’ texts by translating what are cultural approaches into one more specifically pertinent to the literary text, a concept of literary thirdspace, and then taken the discussion back again to an understanding of how readers might perceive these representations of the spatial—both active and inert—and then act upon these perceptions. By drawing on the ideas of social theorists and the ways that ordinary people are seen to be capable of opening up spaces for themselves within what appear to be fixed domains of activity, I have provided the basis for a more expansive examination of the role played by the spatial in this kind of fiction in terms of the fictional child, subjectivity, agency and issues of control.

At the outset, I suggested that spatial in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction is an important textual element in the communication and reception of meaning, but

that narratology theory has not really given due consideration to the spatial at all, and that, in children's literature criticism, approaches to the spatiality of such texts have largely rested on identifying difference rather than seeking to understand the spatial itself. I also noted that an underlying theme would be the constructed and the constructive child on the basis that such texts could reveal the way in which authors view, or at least present, the figure of the child and childhood.

I suggested, therefore, that these texts needed to be re-evaluated in terms of the spatialities they present, and that this re-evaluation should be done not within the parameters of a structural paradigm such as home-away-home (applicable as it may be on one level), but in terms of seeking to understand how and why the wide variety of places and spaces in fantasy fiction for children might function. More particularly, I noted that this required a shift in perspective in order to consider a theory of middles, one that asks questions of the nature of the spatial and what it represents in such fiction, one that is not descriptive or classificatory, but one that can illuminate how agency may or may not be exercised spatially by protagonists and, in turn, readers who experience such spaces in the text.

I also suggested that it is important to ensure that any approach to the spaces of fantasy fiction should be integral to an interlinked mesh of possible approaches to the study of fantasy 'other world' novels for children. Such an approach would add the spatiality of fiction as a complement to other approaches to fantasy 'other world' texts for children and how they might function, rather than attempting to replace them. It would be one that could examine middles by using theories that are largely from outside the realm of literary studies that allow

fantasy spaces to be seen not as a separate, different places, but rather that fantasy 'other' worlds can structure and maintain a new reality. In this way, fantasy texts could be seen not as a barrier separating reality from elsewhere, but rather as constructing bridges towards realities and thus they are not trivial or to be disregarded as frivolous whimsy.

Examining fantasy 'other world' fiction in this way has confirmed that fantasy literature should not be open to criticism on the basis that it requires less on the part of readers in terms of cognitive ability, that it is in some way a lesser kind of fiction. The inherent complexity of spatial arrangements, whether or not they act for or against child protagonists, and in whatever way they subsequently have an influence on readers, shows that they do indeed incorporate

a more complex and more complete understanding of the world and people that remains unspoken beyond the simple surface but provides that simple surface with its comprehensibility. (Nodelman, *Hidden* 206)

To attempt to grasp all that is happening in such novels, it has been necessary to employ theoretical propositions that in themselves are not always easy to grasp, positions about the nature of how different kinds of spatiality are made and re-made, used and, indeed, abused. For this reason, it is unwise to simply consider such texts as simply escapist (enjoyable though they may be to read) or inconsequential, on the basis that they reflect an element of childhood that should be abandoned in order to achieve adulthood. Children's 'other world' fantasy fiction is not childish, for it shows an understanding that the world contains endless possibilities for acting upon and transforming place into space by being open to the possibility of creating new paths, new flows, new patterns and escaping without leaving.

Thus, clearly, such spaces, when fully realised and open, do not exist to support the 'real' in some way, or operate as a site for child protagonists to solve personal problems before coming home to apply the solutions. This is simply a utilitarian fashioning of space that posits only one knowable reality as truth. In the same way, these new spaces need not be seen as being in some way inferior to the real, or as in need of salvation by protagonists from the 'real' world because they do not counter the real except in those instances where authors seek to present the case that it is necessary to discard "the licentious ways of knowing that constitute fantasy" (Summerfield xiii) in order to grow up. Indeed, the way in which I have reconsidered the nature of the spaces shows that the idea of them being liminal locations is belied by the kinds of activities that take place within them. This argues that these spaces need not be seen as the mechanism for the process of maturation, where the other is set up as seemingly desirable, but then is ultimately to be rejected by the child who wishes to adopt the adult mode of existence.

As I have noted, the spatiality of fantasy 'other world' texts should be seen as locatable within an understanding that there are different degrees of the spatially dynamic. In the most spatially open examples, rather than figuring an epistemic child, what is presented is the experiential child, with children at play (although not in a trivial sense) and exercising their freedom to connect spatially by taking up opportunities to performatively act as agents within their own spatial domains.

Childhood, at least as constructed in those novels where the space of the child is made available to be played with and within, is not therefore, a matter of status, but one of action. Childhood can therefore be seen not so much as a



disposition but as an accomplishment, performatively expressed and enacted through and by the ability to create and use space. In this sense then, the figure of the child in spatially dynamic narratives is no longer child as such because that figure is not called into being but is self-constructing in a process that is not one of becoming towards adulthood—since both child and adult are, in theory, able to operate spatially in much the same way—but is one that asserts the existence of the ontological subject as autonomous entity, where the spatial thirdspace operates as an unbounded tactical instance of playing within the present, the here and now that is not restricted to the temporality of the novel's frame.

That spatial creativity is seen as a power that can be re-utilised on a continuing basis, whereby ways of making and re-making spaces are equally accessible, in varying degrees, to both child and adult, argues that the thirdspace imagination and capacity for play that is usually ascribed only to the figure of the child is really a quintessential part of our nature as human beings. This availability to all denies, therefore, an idea that Nikolajeva expresses thus: “children who do not grow up are confined to their childhood, while a grown-up who goes back to the innocence of childhood is undoubtedly regressing, mentally and morally” (“Growing Up” 131). In terms of certain kinds of behaviour, this might be considered the case, but the spatial does not equivocate between ‘adult’ and ‘child’ in that all individuals, young or old, can actualise potential space. Physical growth may be a continual process but, as Ursula Le Guin suggests, “an adult is not a dead child, but a child who survived” (“Americans” 39); spatially speaking, this is certainly the case, even though it is not commonly a feature of children's texts.

Indeed, if it is possible to imagine space in the physical world of consensus reality as a multiplicity of layers and potential spaces awaiting actualisation by adult and child alike, then it is no great leap to see how ‘other worlds’ in fantasy fiction can operate in much the same way, and both the construction of space in the real world and that of thirdspace in fantasy texts can mirror and replicate each other endlessly through the suggestion that children (and adults) do possess an ability to construct their own spaces and rules for their own spaces, to positively change their own experience of the places they encounter and not just be passive game-pieces moved around in an adult directed world.

The structure of physical places may indeed guide and direct individuals’ interactions with that location but, reciprocally, individuals are able to restructure and reinterpret that place as a space for their own purposes through an exercise of the tactics of agency in unfolding and authoring spaces, and in their opportunities to interact within the space. Through this display of tactics, spatial forms and arrangements in fantasy ‘other world’ literature for children, show that such literary spaces (together with the space of the real world, however it might be individually configured) are always a contestable, and therefore, contested, domain. What we consider to be social reality or social phenomena are constructed and continuously reconstructed through the dynamic interrelations of protagonists with the spatial context in which they exist and thus, in both the text and consensus reality, such a space always “resists theoretical closure” (Oakes 523) because both protagonists and readers are constantly enabled “to think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related

concepts that compose and comprise the inherent *spatiality of human life*” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 1, original emphasis).

Constructed child protagonists, even restrictively constructed characters, can still be constructive, and even when protagonists and spaces are designed to be closed and referential or even deferential to the real, they can still push the constructed reader to potential spatial re-enactment. In this way, the author’s relationship with the reader can be seen as an instance of playing with spatial potential for, even when authors seek to propose a more confined and confining message, readers can still wrench something from the constricted spatial setting; beyond the immediate experience of the text is the meaning of the experience. This also means that any danger that understandings of the spatial in children’s literature themselves become a privileged, textual, discursive space accessible only to those academic intellectuals who propose them (myself included) is thwarted by the very practical everyday practices of the spatial that every individual can exercise and perform.

This thesis has, therefore, directed attention to the fact that spatial forms and arrangements in fantasy literature for children cannot and should not be totalised or reduced to a minor role, and that this literary space—as is the space of the real world, however that might be construed—is always a contestable, and therefore, contested, domain. The spatial in fantasy ‘other world’ fiction for children is indeed “a site of both *meaningful identity* and *immediate agency*” (Oakes 510, original emphasis), one that clearly mediates between the aesthetic, the cognitive and the social as an integral element of the lived lives of people, young and old, in their own personal locations. However, this is not the end of

the story, and the point that this thesis has reached inevitably begs a series of further questions, four of which seem to have primary importance.

The first point to emerge is that, with its emphasis on the fluidity between real and unreal spaces, both within the text and in the constructed world of consensus reality, this thesis has called into question how fantasy literature should be understood, and more specifically whether or not the term 'fantasy literature' itself needs to be redefined. Zipes, for one, is clear that "there is something strangely paradoxical about seeking to define fantasy as a genre with set conventions and purposes, since its very essence, it seems to me is its antigeneric quality" (188), and if it is possible to author the real, both textually and in consensus reality, then reality itself is ultimately only a description of a more fundamental and spatially fluid condition of existence.

Marking a text as fantasy simply because it posits a spatiality that is in contrast to something else that stands as 'real', but which is already in contrast to any number of other possible realities becomes like trying to take a firm foothold on very shifting sands. As I noted in my introduction, seeing fantasy 'other world' texts in the way I have outlined does question the nature of literary 'fantasy' and 'realism' as exclusive terms. The consideration of thirdspace in a literary text works both within and against the codes of representation that reference the verisimilitude of quotidian existence and question the status of representation and our access to experience. This demands further attention.

Second, I have only talked of the spatiality of fantasy other worlds, and there are other forms of fantasy novel to be considered in this light. In addition, there is also the question of the nature of the spatial in other kinds of fiction for children (including, for example, historical time-slip novels), and whether or not

similar operations apply in those narrative forms, which may lead to a need, perhaps, to re-think notions of spatiality in children's literature generally. This also raises the question of how these very much western spatial ideas can be considered in light of fantasy and other texts from cultures that do not have this same social and cultural history behind them. The concept of a literary thirdspace that I have worked with here may be appropriate for the particular kinds of texts I have focused upon, yet how the concept of thirdspace might operate in other texts and cultures needs thought. Indeed, the complexity of spatial thinking and how it operates in both literary spaces and real world spaces requires that additional, perhaps even contradictory, ways of approaching the spatial need to be developed in order to really come to terms with the spatiality of children's fiction. In turn, since "[e]very age [...] has its own realism" (Stern 174), there is a need to obtain a greater understanding of the historicity of spatial representation in children's fiction than the very specific approach I have taken here would allow.

A third important point is the clear need to consider the more nuanced and subtle ways in which the spatiality of fiction for children is gendered. The novels I have discussed have had a mix of male and female protagonists, but even a cursory glance reveals that the texts I have considered to be less open to thirdspace interpretations have had female protagonists such as Griselda and Lyra, protagonists who are seen to be followers rather than leaders in space-making. Even Lucy Pevensie, the first of the Pevensie children to enter Narnia, has her access taken over and ultimately dominated by her older brother, Peter. In contrast, in my examination of texts I promoted as being more spatially active, the protagonists were male. Although it is not possible to draw far-reaching

conclusions from this, the coincidence should not be overlooked. Nikolajeva, it is true, has suggested that novelistic chronotopes are gendered, with “male” texts structuring time as linear and space as open, while “female” texts structuring time as circular and space as “closed and confined” (*Children’s* 125), but she does not develop this idea. More analysis of such texts in terms of how gender might play a role in the construction of space by protagonists in fantasy texts (and in other genres) is surely an important next step.

Finally, there is the link between what I have said about the spatiality of literary texts and what occurs in “reality”; how real child readers really do respond to the worlds of fantasy texts, and how these do (or do not) open up avenues of action and spatial agency for them. Thus, there is the question of how social theories might benefit from an examination of the spatial in children’s literature, for “[s]ocial scientists must overcome their distrust in textual representations as viable evidence” (Coats 141), studying real children as well as representations of children in order to achieve a more complete understanding. At the same time, however, at least in the United Kingdom, it would appear that children are engaging in fewer playground games and sports activities, and many schools have banned such open play activities as snowball fights, conker fights, British Bulldog, three-legged races and even hopscotch (Association of Teachers and Lecturers). In taking such measures, regardless of motivation on health and safety grounds, these actions have defined children’s activities within adult conceptions of what is or is not appropriate play. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that fantasy novels that open up opportunities for the freedom of space-making and the playing that such space-making suggest are

popular, but how much does popularity alone reveal about the experience and effects of these texts, and how can those effects be assessed?

Arguments in literary criticism (and beyond), such as that typified by Jacqueline Rose, have engendered “a neglect of the child as a social being, with a voice” (Rudd 16). The philosophically constituted child may be unvoiced, but that does not have to be the case with the social child. As Allison James says,

[g]iving voice to children is not simply or only about letting children speak; it is about exploring the unique contribution to our understanding of and theorizing about the social world that children’s perspectives can provide. (“Giving” 262)

Moreover, what James says about voice here is not just a question of the voice of the text (for that may be simply that of the author, however open to the idea of being spatially constructive that author might be), nor is it the voice in response to text but, as in the case of Leslie and then Jess in *Bridge to Terabithia*, it relates to how texts might subsequently influence lived lives, giving a spatial ‘voice’ to individuals, including adults as the other half of the dual audience equation, in these lived lives.

As Soja has commented, “it is space not time that hides consequences from us” (*Postmodern* 23) and, for Foucault, “[a] whole history remains to be written of *spaces*” (“Eye” 149, original emphasis). This is also true of children’s fiction, with its ideological import usually tucked neatly away beneath a covering of adventure and magic and apparent strangeness. Although it does not uncover all of the consequences, my study of the spatiality in fantasy fiction for children opens up many other paths that might be followed in search of them. However, although I have not travelled along the various other roads, I hope that others will also notice the signposts and follow these matters up themselves, for there is a

vast body of texts that I have not even touched upon, all of which have spaces and places within them that can reveal much more.

What I have outlined, therefore, is a starting point, one that is not the opening move in a home-away-home again journey that returns only to a place of critical safety. It is a starting point which recognises that what is required is a narrative approach which takes account of the creation, nature and role of places and spaces in children's literature, both in terms of authors and protagonists, and in respect of readers. It involves an understanding of how their differences and similarities all bring something to the nature of the narrative, to the nature of the child protagonists, and to the nature of readers (both children and adults, however those terms might be defined). In this respect, it is the opening of a door onto what should be

a cultural location where the language of place and space has a rightful role, generates positive content, emphasizes the particularity of places and of people's relations to them, and stands not in opposition but in relation to the language of actions and events, of time and history. (Kort, *Place* 10)

It is the opening of a door, therefore, onto both a discursive and experienced spatiality which understands more clearly how and why places and spaces matter.



## Endnotes

1. There is, for example, a growing body of work on the “home” in children’s literature and on landscape. See, for example, Thiel; and Alston (*Family*).

2. As Zoran notes, this is true of literature generally, where “research on the subject is quite diffuse, and there are few assumptions that have become generally accepted” (310).

3. The terms ‘place’ and ‘space’ are fraught with academic baggage and different approaches and writers use them in different ways. For an introduction to the variety of implications of the terms, see Agnew.

4. The term ‘thirdspace’ is from Soja (*Thirdspace*), and will be elaborated upon in more detail in Chapter 1.

5. I am not overlooking the literary aspects of Possible Worlds Theory, which does consider the literary spatial in more detail. I address this later in the thesis.

6. For earlier narratological approaches that overlook the spatial element, see, among others, Chatman; Prince; Rimmon-Keenan; Martin; Fludernik; Bal (*Narratology*); and Herman (*Story*).

7. Chatman, for example, does mention Robert Liddell’s proposed categorisation of setting and its relationship to plot and character into five types (143), but he does not examine it in any detail.

8. See, for example, Herman (*Basic*). Bal has also now called for a “description-bound narratology of the novel” (“Over-writing” 571), thereby seeking to re-evaluate elements such as the spatial that have traditionally been ascribed minor roles.

9. See particularly McCallum; and Nikolajeva (*Children's*). McCallum sets out Bakhtin's ideas at the start but does not discuss in detail how the chronotope's spatial element adds to her readings. Similarly, Nikolajeva invokes the chronotope only to move away from its central premise to focus on the Bakhtinian idea that "specific forms of chronotope are unique for particular genres" (121).

10. Eduard Vlasov, for example, notes Bakhtin's focus on time, but he concludes that Bakhtin's work does contain a comprehensive theory of space which, asserts Vlasov, is "one of the most fundamental pillars for the study of space in current narratology" (37). However, Vlasov himself does not dwell on this, and, to my knowledge, no critic has yet re-examined Bakhtin in the light of Vlasov's claim.

11. This is also true, of course, for a narrator different than the omniscient author, and for the reader.

12. Although I keep the types separate, Nikolajeva believes this two-world structure is also present in one-world fantasy novels such as Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (*Magic* 13). There is some sense that this is true, although my reasons for why this would be the case differ from Nikolajeva's.

13. Miéville is commenting on the difference between fantasy and science fiction.

14. Moretti draws his conclusions from a discussion of Propp's structural fairy tale schema.

15. On the pattern's circularity, see, amongst others, Nikolajeva (*Children's*).

16. Frankel's argument draws on the work of D. W. Winnicott, who I also discuss in Chapter Two.

17. For how this notion is developed in the 1960s see, for example, Berger and Luckmann. Unfortunately, Berger and Luckmann offer little analysis of how reality is constructed, providing only general arguments for such construction and exploring their implications for social life. Of relevance here is the point that their study focuses on an individual's experience, perception and understanding.

18. Which also confirms that examining spatiality is but one tool available in a complex of approaches to any given text or set of texts.

19. This compares with an actor who, says Karp, performs action that are "rule governed or oriented" (137).

20. Reimer and Bradford are not talking specifically about fantasy fiction here.

21. Kort does not actually consider the spatiality of children's fantasy novels, which is disappointing given his interest in C. S. Lewis.

22. See, for example, Zahorski and Boyer; and Mendlesohn.

23. A notable exception being Linda Hutcheon who, after retiring, expressed regret at her lack of awareness of the possibilities children's literature offered ("Harry" 170).

24. For an introduction to key theorists on space, see Crang and Thrift. Casey (*Fate*) offers an overview of the historical development of philosophical spatial thinking.

25. I do not, however, intend this as a directly oppositional, anti-historical approach.

26. Jackson's condemnation is from 1981, of course. It remains the case, however, that fantasy literature is still something of a literary Cinderella.

27. See, for example, Oziewicz and Hade.

28. Suvin terms this process "topoanalysis" (312)

29. Soja terms these Firstspace (practice or perceived space) and Secondspace (representations of space) respectively (*Thirdspace* 10).

30. Unfortunately, Bruner dismisses the child's ability to multi-view the world in this way.

31. Certeau's place and space are not opposites; in fact, one merges into the other through individual activity (c.f. Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the way smooth space and striated space can mix).

32. Fox sees this space, however as "the liminal space between the real and the imaginary," where protagonists live "liminal lives" (255, 265), which I see as a misunderstanding of the spatial, especially in terms of the literary thirdspace.

33. Schubert primarily discusses the sensation of 'being there' felt by video gamers within electronic landscapes, but he broadens this consideration to all forms of mediated experiences within any environment.

34. Clifford uses roots/routes to describe negotiations of cultural identity: "roots" refers to cultural homogeneity and fixedness, whilst "routes" implies diffusion, intercultural movement and migration. The two are not necessarily opposed but rather "intertwined" (4), representing different, but not mutually exclusive, considerations of the relationship between people, culture, and place.

35. For more on fantasy role playing games, see Fines.

36. Grenby slightly misreads the nature of the spatiality of Narnia, here, but I discuss this further in chapter three.

37. For ease, however, I continue to refer to these novels as fantasy novels.

38. Walter Mitty appears in the short story, “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”, first published in the March 18th, 1938 issue of *The New Yorker*, and subsequently in book form in Thurber’s collection, *My World—and Welcome to It* (1942).

39. Vaihinger insists that humans *must* construct “as if” explanations, but he does also note that these have a temporary nature; thus, arguably, they can be seen as contingent and recognised as such by those who create them.

40. And ultimately for readers too (see chapter five for more on this).

41. The point is moot. Whilst later other world novels often expand on the idea of multiple realities, postmodernism is not the (only) catalyst for such world-building. Given the earlier precedents, it seems naive to suggest postmodernism as a primary initiative for multiverses.

42. For how Possible Worlds Theory in literary studies applies concepts from Possible Worlds logic to the worlds of fictional texts, see for example Bruner; Ronen; Doležel (*Heterocosmica*); and Ryan (*Possible*).

43. There is a clear distinction between the nature of the spatial in the rites of passage rituals in traditional societies and what might be experienced as such in more modern societies, making it problematic when removed from its original ritual context.

44. Bhabha is specifically talking of cultural hybridity here, but his understanding of thirdspace is relevant.

45. This notion of liminoid rather than liminal also links to Winnicott's notions of the transitional third space discussed later in this chapter.

46. The exact nature and purpose of children's play remains unresolved. See, amongst others, Sutton-Smith; and Goldman. See also the broad criteria to define what constitutes play in Ruben, Fein, and Vandenberg.

47. Lowe notes that "[g]ames share several striking properties with the universes of fiction" (31), where the story world resembles the game board, and characters the pieces. Thus, perhaps *ludus* might be seen as plot, whilst *paidia* might be seen as the performance of actions within the spatial environment of that plot.

48. Although Smith also notes that the "existence of rules is not a clear-cut criterion to distinguish play and games" (12).

49. Caillois identifies four types of play—agôn, alea, mimicry and ilinx—with each being conducted on some point on the scale between *paidia* and *ludus* (12–13). Thirdspace imagination most resembles what Caillois terms mimicry, pretend play revolving around imaginary universes. However, Caillois insists that the purpose of mimicry is "to imitate adults" (21), which is not my argument.

50. Unfortunately, Caillois uses play to define the natures of different cultures, with a somewhat ethnocentric approach biased towards his concept of his own culture's superiority.

51. Cohen and MacKeith studied the imaginary worlds of individuals or small groups of children, calling such worlds a "paracosm" (a term first coined in 1976 by Robert Silvey, and also found in Silvey and MacKeith. Cohen and

MacKeith believe the creation of paracosms usually emerges at age 7 or 8, and lasts until 13 or 14 before gradually subsiding (103).

52. Postman argues such play is now lost, although my own arguments suggests Postman is premature in this.

53. Britton considers literary fantasy as “the handling of images *as play*” (40, original emphasis) and uses concepts from Winnacott (he was Winnacott’s brother-in-law) to see fantasy as located in a third area that offers a space where the individual can, temporarily, freely explore and create a reality. However, this notion has never really been developed in children’s literature criticism.

54. The original broadcast is preserved as *Utopie et littérature* (Utopia and Literature), recorded document, 7 December, 1966. Centre Michel Foucault, Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, reference C116.

55. Deleuze and Guattari also refer to a “a ludic model, which would compare games according to their type of space” (*Plateaus* 551).

56. Parts of this chapter were presented at the IRSCS congress in Frankfurt in 2009.

57. Unfortunately, Rosenthal she sees this as a process of psychological reconciliation of the unexplained or unknown for protagonists, thus privileging the psychological reading over the spatial.

58. From the 1823 song, “Home, Sweet Home” (music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, lyrics by actor and dramatist John Howard Payne).

59. This also raises the question of gender and spatiality, a topic impossible to pursue here.

60. See Pullman (“Dark”).

61. This explanation does not always appear in paperback editions.

62. Specifically those emerging from many-worlds theory first outlined in the 1950s. See Everett.

63. An idea that draws upon actual scientific understanding and theories in quantum physics that have developed since the 1950s. See also note 62.

64. Gooding's psychoanalytical reading of *Coraline* sees it as "as a mode of inquiry into psychic development" (405 n.4).

65. For copyright reasons, the illustrations are not reproduced.

66. Gooding's specific focus is on Gaiman's *Coraline*.

67. For copyright reasons, the maps discussed are not shown.

68. Examples include E. H. Shepard's 1933 map for *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), the 1972 Narnia map by Pauline Baynes (the original Narnia series illustrator), not printed in the books until the 2006 HarperCollins edition, and the maps of, among others, Wonderland and Neverland in Hennessey.

69. On 'readerly' or 'writerly' texts, see Barthes's (*S/Z*), especially pages 3–6.

70. The expression derives from Korzybski's statement that "the map is *not* the territory" (58, original emphasis).

71. In her light-hearted book on the fantasy genre, Diana Wynne Jones suggests that *all* fantasy stories ever told actually occur in one, real land, "Fantasyland," that the stories' creators are the "The Management," offering "tours" of this real land, readers are tourists, writers are their guides, and the stories are sight-seeing tours (*Tough* 9–11).

72. Map by John Lawrence.

73. Map by Jules Feiffer.



74. Consider, however, Robert Louis Stevenson's statement about *Treasure Island* (1883) that drawing the map of the island originated the story ("First" 37).

75. Originally designed by Harry Beck in 1932.

76. This is Ross Johnston's term for "the representation of time-space in picture-book art and illustration" (152). It can, however, also apply to maps.

77. Much of this section on maps was first presented at the 2008 Child and the Book conference in Buffalo, New York, then revised and published in *International Research in Children's Literature*.

78. Unfortunately, for Rosenthal, the purpose of the process is to return readers to the "three-dimensional world of fact and utility" better prepared for real life (188). This reference is to the maturation process, something I have already suggested is not at work.

79. Such culture shock instances work with the trope of the stranger/outsider who comments, implicitly or explicitly, on the 'new' place and so require a different analysis.

80. These cues could be facial expressions or gestures, customs or beliefs. Acquiring such social and cultural cues whilst growing up, they are as much a part of our culture as language and, even when operating subconsciously, they are essential for social existence.

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