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„Childhood and Adolescence in Fantasy Literature
for Children and Young Adults“

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE	6
2.1. Definitions of children's literature and its relationship with children	6
2.2. A brief history of children's literature	13
2.3. The Romantic child and its origins	16
3. FANTASY LITERATURE	22
3.1. The origins of fantasy literature	22
3.2. Overlaps and boundaries – Fantasy as a genre	25
3.3. Fantasy, children and childishness	30
3.4. Maria Nikolajeva's Magic Code – The concept of the other world in fantasy literature	34
4. J. M. BARRIE: PETER PAN	39
4.1. The subversion of the Romantic child	40
4.2. Wendy and the lost boys	47
4.3. The construction of the Neverland	49
5. C. S. LEWIS: THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	53
5.1. Growing up in Narnia	54
5.2. The Problem of Susan	58
5.3. The magical realm of Narnia	62
6. PHILIP PULLMAN: HIS DARK MATERIALS	68
6.1. The deconstruction of Romanticism and fantasy	69
6.2. Lyra, Will and their dæmons	73
6.3. Travelling through the multiverse	77

7. CONCLUSION	80
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	84
9. APPENDIX	89

List of Abbreviations

Since my bibliography contains more than one work by some authors, I have used shortened versions of the book/article titles as a means of differentiation:

Primary Sources:

Lewis, C. S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*:

The Magician's Nephew – “Magician”

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – “Lion”

The Horse and His Boy – “Horse”

Prince Caspian – “Caspian”

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader – “Voyage”

The Silver Chair – “Chair” (unreferenced)

The Last Battle – “Battle”

Secondary Sources:

Gavin, Adrienne. “The Child in British Literature: An Introduction.”

– “An Introduction”

Gavin, Adrienne. “Unadulterated Childhood: The Child in Edwardian Fiction.”

– “Unadulterated Childhood”

Hollindale, Peter. Introduction. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens and Peter and Wendy*.

– “Introduction”

Hollindale, Peter. *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*.

– “Signs of Childness”

Nikolajeva, Maria. *The Magic Code. The use of magical patterns in fantasy for children*. – “Magic Code”

Nikolajeva, Maria. *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*.

– “Power, Voice and Subjectivity”

1. Introduction

The correlation between children's literature and the fantasy genre has a history of resulting in some of the most popular books for children and young adults in the history of literature. The immense success of the *Harry Potter* series has been a very recent phenomenon, and has resulted in a variety of similarly marketed books published specifically for the ages of childhood and adolescence. However, the popularity of children's fantasy literature has been evident for much longer than that, perhaps since the very beginnings of children's literature. One of the questions I will seek to answer in this thesis will be why children and fantasy are considered to be inherently compatible, an association that has dominated markets for children's book publishing for long.

However, it is primarily the relationship between childhood and fantasy itself that interests me. In this thesis, I will aim to provide a clear theoretical background of both children's and fantasy literature, in order to set the framework for the analysis of my selection of literary works. Children's literature has proven to be a difficult genre to define, which is why I will endeavour to give a comprehensive overview of the possibilities of looking at and working with this genre. I believe that the historical development of children's literature is also important in order to understand how conceptions and literary depictions of childhood evolved over time in relation to each other. The main focus of this paper will be the literary representations of childhood and how the writers of the three series of texts I have chosen to examine either reinforce, subvert or entirely deconstruct the image of the Romantic child and the idealisation of childhood. Consequently, I will attempt to trace back the origins of the concept of the child as a pure, innocent 'better' human being and the idea that childhood is inherently preferable to adulthood, which is a common expression of an idealised portrayal of childhood and influenced by the proposals and suggestions of the Romantic period (which in itself was subject to a variety of influences). I wish to find out what influence come together in the Romantic ideal of children and which other epochs use this or a slightly altered notion of what constitutes childhood.

The second part of this paper will be concerned with a detailed study of the genre of fantasy literature, which has long been considered a genre for children on the grounds of being escapist and imaginative but not 'serious' literature. I will try to explain the

evolution of fantasy literature from its origins to the wide variety of subgenres the term is considered to encompass today. Definitions and historical theories are not necessarily a main concern of mine in this thesis; nevertheless, I believe it is important to provide an overview of the definitions and concepts that I will be working with during the analytical part. The development of fantasy literature is especially interesting when regarded in its relationship with children's literature, which will be a focal point of this section. Moreover, I will make an effort to outline some critical positions in favour of and opposing the view that there is a link between children and fantasy, while trying to relate these claims to the idealisation of childhood that I want to discuss in the children's literature part. Maria Nikolajeva's *The Magic Code* is a theoretical work that is concerned with fantasy terminology, which I will attempt to summarise and apply in the part of the thesis that is concerned with literary analysis. As fantasy is a wide academic field, I believe it will be beneficial to focus on a specific set of terms.

Finally, the three literary works that I have decided to examine during my work on this thesis are very well-known and well-received texts of fantasy literature for children: J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* all offer a variety of interesting interpretations of both fantasy and childhood. One of the themes I am especially interested in exploring in these books is the link between the fantasy world and the child, and how the child is pictured as growing up in this world, as well as the aspect of imagination in relation to both, as a symbol of this connection. Imagination is a term that is frequently brought up in studies concerned with either fantasy or children's literature as the concept can be linked to both and represents one of the most characteristic common features of these genres. I will endeavour to provide comprehensive interpretations of the literary works I have chosen as well as to present an inclusive analysis of how the concepts of fantasy and childhood work together in them, how this connection affects depictions of adolescence, and in what form Romanticist ideals of children are perceptible in the texts.

2. Children's Literature

The first part of my thesis is the discussion of children's literature and its range of definitions and variations. The complexity of children's literature has led to a wide variety of approaches of studying the definition, history and discourse of the subject. According to Beck, there is a tendency that such approaches lean towards a predisposition to be either 'child-centred' or 'book-centred' (1). Hollindale remarks that there is a marked difference between the analysis of "children's *literature*" and "*children's literature*" (*Signs of Childness* 16). Although the overall topic of this thesis seems to emphasise the child aspect, I would argue that my approach overall is more book-centred, as my focus lies on the depiction of childhood in literature rather than a discussion of how this holds up to the actual child's experience. While this is not the primary subject of this thesis, I will nevertheless attempt to cover the most important efforts to find a satisfying definition of children's literature, in order to give a broader understanding of the area of my studies. As my thesis is concerned with three different books or series of children's fantasy literature of three different time periods, I will furthermore discuss the development of children's literature. Finally, the focus of this study is to find traces of the image of the Romantic child, the idealisation of childhood and possible subversions thereof in these three popular fantasy novels for children that I have selected for my studies. Hence, this chapter will also include a detailed analysis of the depiction of children and childhood in general, as envisioned by those reinforcing the characteristics of the Romantic child in literature.

2.1. Definitions of children's literature and its relationship with children

There are different approaches to finding an all-encompassing definition of children's literature, some of which I will discuss here. After all, it can not be denied that J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* are fundamentally different books, with very different depictions of children, their growing up, and the worlds they live in. One might therefore and with justification ask what these books have in common to be all grouped together under the superordinate term of "children's literature".

As discussed before, Hollindale postulates that there are inherent differences when it comes to looking at definitions of children's literature; he claims that one could analyse the term with an emphasis on the 'children' aspect of it or put the focus on literature (*Signs of Childness* 16). His approach is to discuss these terms separately and in relation to each other, arguing that otherwise it is common to give priority to only one and thus ignore important implications of the other (Hollindale, *Signs of Childness* 8). He then asserts that the term children's literature implies a possession of literature of children, asking if one now considers only those children who have the ability to read it, those who want to read it or those who are the appropriate audience due to their emotional maturity, calling even the ability of the term to encompass all available meanings of the term 'children' into question.

Beck (3), in response to Hollindale's questions, claims that the terms 'children' and 'literature' "depend on each other for definition". She offers the description of children's literature as literature that is considered to be appropriate for children of the time in which it is written and children that are considered to be the appropriate readers of that literature, while simultaneously declaring this attempt at an explanation "wholly inadequate" (Beck 3). Lesnik-Oberstein also mentions the problems in children's literature criticism that stem from the general assumption that there are independent, all-encompassing definitions of either term, a consistent concept of 'child' and 'literature' that can be brought together in the discussion of children's literature (23). She claims that it is important to consider both terms as equally constructing and influencing each other, rather than as strictly separate. Hollindale maintains that in order to find one or multiple satisfying definitions of childhood, there needs to be an acceptance that the notion of childhood is not at all a fixed concept and instead varies within historical and cultural discourses (*Signs of Childness* 60).

Lesnik-Oberstein (17) cites the relationship that children's books have with their audience (children) as one of the most important aspects of defining children's literature, as these books differ from other variations of literature in that they are written with that particular audience in mind.

The definition of 'children's literature' therefore is underpinned by purpose: it wants to be something in particular, because this is supposed to connect it with that reading audience - 'children' - with which it declares itself to be overtly and purposefully concerned. But is a children's book a book written by children, or for children? And, crucially: what does it mean to write a book 'for' children? If it is a book written 'for' children, is it then still a children's book if it is (only) read by adults? What of 'adult' books read also by children - are they 'children's literature'? (Lesnik-Oberstein 17)

This is a common aspect of research concerned with children's literature, not just in Western literary discourse but found in various cultures all over the world, as well as the assumption that the child as an entity as such exists, though the exact qualities it is assumed to have may differ depending on the cultural background. Though depictions of children may vary between different cultures, the universality of the existence of the 'child' is not questioned (Lesnik-Oberstein 21). Rose claims that the perceived universal idea of the 'child' is constructed for the purpose of literary analysis, rather than an actual objectively examined entity (Lesnik-Oberstein 19), while also pointing out that the child can not be analysed without its counterpart: the adult (Beck 3, who likens this to the dependence of 'child' and 'literature' on each other for definition).

The audience of children's books is also a big part of the concerns about the possibility of children's literature being able to influence children in one way or another (Lesnik-Oberstein 22). The underlying assumption here being, obviously, that children somehow differ from adults as an audience, that they are more susceptible to ideologies perpetrated by books. Moreover, this is evidence of a claim that literary critics have been sometimes known to make: "that they know more about children or the child and how and why it reads than the critics they disagree with" (Lesnik-Oberstein 22). To make such a claim, however, inevitably simultaneously states that one does understand such things at all, when it is still heavily debated that anyone can tell with certainty why children read some books and how they understand them (or why and how adults read books, for that matter).

There is an educational aspect prevalent in the discussions of children's literature that differentiates it from other variations of literature. For instance, Hunt defines childhood as "the period of life which the immediate culture thinks of as being free of responsibility and susceptible to education" (Hunt quoted in Beck 4). This definition is interesting, because it recognises two very dominant aspects of children's literature

discourse: the nostalgia for childhood as the time before one had to grow up (and take responsibility), as well as the other assumption that children are ‘works in progress’ who need to be educated in order to become functioning adults in society. Hollindale argues that in Western culture, influenced by Romanticism, traces of childhood are valued as they are found in adult life and claims that this desire to feel close to their childhood again and remembering it fondly is part of why adults read children’s books (*Signs of Childness* 31). I will further discuss both of these notions in subsequent sections.

Hollindale (*Signs of Childness* 12) suggests that our criticism of children’s literature depends on the way we see childhood: do we see it as a period of preparation for adulthood, a time for education and a sort of training for eventual adulthood, or do we see it as “an autonomous part of life” (*Signs of Childness*, 13) and a time for experiences and development aside from growing up? He claims that while we may nowadays regard the period of childhood as important, we still look at it from the perspective of adults, which shapes our dealing with this time. Moreover, he proposes that not only adults create their own construction of childhood when they write books about or for children, but that children may also construct their own idea of childhood and are influenced by the books that they read. This argument supports the idea that children’s books have an impact on their audience that writers need to be mindful of. It has also been used in support of advocating children’s reading, emphasising that children need to experience multiple variations of possible childhoods, which means that reading about numerous fictional accounts of childhood will serve to “enrich and diversify their sense of what it can mean to be a child” (Hollindale, *Signs of Childness* 15).

The concept of supporting children’s educational development through children’s literature is discussed also by Lesnik-Oberstein who proposes to differentiate between children’s literature as such and books used for didactic and educational purposes (23). However, there may well be overlaps between those differentiations (especially as Lesnik-Oberstein does not define what she means by children’s literature that does *not* have a didactic purpose), as many children’s books are written with a certain moralistic approach in mind, and while not appearing to be overly educational, may very well still have the support of the child’s emotional or moral development in mind. Lesnik-

Oberstein argues that “this is how ‘children’s literature’ defines ‘literature’”, as being able of helping children to become better, as something that is good for the child, a definition that, she admits, makes many assumptions about knowing the implied child reader (23). Huck (quoted in Lesnik-Oberstein 23) summarises the main points of this idea as follows: “good writing, or effective use of language...will help the reader to experience the delight of beauty, wonder, and humor...He will be challenged to dream dreams, to ponder, and to ask questions to himself”.

There is also the possibility of trying to look at definitions of children’s literature from a publisher’s point of view, rather than a literary critic’s. Ewers claims that the term children’s literature (and young adult literature, both of which he discusses simultaneously) has been used to describe the entirety of literature that children and young adults read (2). However, he also states that the books that are read by children and young adults are not necessarily the books that were written with this specific audience in mind. Examples would include Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and German author Karl May’s *Winnetou* series. These books have been widely read by children and adolescents in previous decades, even though they were neither written nor marketed as children’s books in the time they were first published. Moreover, there is a significant amount of literature that is read by both children and adults, and has actually been intended and received this way at the time of its first publication, such as Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (Voutta 14).

Ewers further discusses that since there are significant discrepancies that have to be considered between books written for children and young adults and books read by children and young adults, the term ‘children’s literature’ might instead be used to describe literature that is written with that particular audience in mind, whether or not it is also consumed by adults (3). This might well be a better approach of defining children’s literature, but does not really include books that are written with no particular audience in mind, or books that are written as possibly appealing to both children and adults. It is noteworthy to mention that the people deciding to write, publish, market or buy a children’s book are almost exclusively adults – writers, publishers, booksellers, parents or teachers (Voutta 14). Children, however, remain the ones deciding whether or not to read a book, exceptions being, perhaps, the books that have to be read in school. It seems unlikely that anyone, including the intended audience, actually knows which

books children will want to read, any more than anyone has figured out the key to what makes novels popular with adults.

The fact that children, after all, do not choose their own literature (rare cases excepted) but have it chosen for them by adults, is also interesting in terms of what was discussed earlier, namely the influence that the fictional portrayal of childhood is assumed to have on children. Hollindale claims that by reading books, children come into contact with fictional childhoods imagined by adults and therefore not really authentic different experiences, which should not be left out when using this argumentation (*Signs of Childness* 15). However, he does state that he believes in the importance of reading children's books, claiming there is "no substitute for the book, and for the child in the book" (Hollindale, *Signs of Childness* 21). Voutta claims that the one thing all children's literature (written by adults) has in common is the fact that the childhood experience as such remains out of reach for the author (9). Even though every author will have been a child him- or herself once, they can only try to access their own unique experience of childhood, as much as it may have shaped them, by using a mixture of memories, imagination and fantasies which results in a highly adult-influenced recounting of childhood (Voutta 9). In terms of what Ewers has discussed, I do believe that the idea of the intended audience is much more fruitful in an attempt to define children's literature than counting every book ever read by a child.

There are certain motifs and themes established and common in children's literature and there have been numerous attempts of compiling lists that would encompass most of these. It has also been suggested that such lists could be used as a catalogue of criteria in order to determine if something should count as children's literature or not, however, such notions have since been disbanded (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 75). There are simply no actual limitations as to what form children's literature can take, which is why subsequent attempts to categorise motifs and themes of children's literature have been discussed in a more specified approach, such as the specifics of children's fantasy literature or realistic children's literature.

Something that most children's books do have in common, which may be used as a way of differentiating children's literature from literature aimed at adults, is the child as the protagonist. This is cited as a main criterion of what constitutes children's literature by

Maria Nikolajeva (*Magic Code* 14), whose works I will discuss in more detail in the chapters concerned with fantasy literature. There are exceptions to this rule, of course, such as Henry James' *What Maisie Knew*, which is not typically considered to be a work of children's literature, and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which *is*, does not feature a child protagonist. The three novels/series of books that I have chosen for my analysis do all have a main character who is a child and I would argue that especially contemporary children's literature is highly likely to feature a child as the main character – and also likely to be read by a wider audience than just children.

In an attempt at comprising all nuances of definitions of children's literature, Hollindale proposes the following possibilities at cataloguing this term:

1. Children's literature is a body of work forming the combined outcome of intentions and decisions on the part of authors, publishers and booksellers. It includes a corporate commercial design on the child market.
 2. Children's literature is a body of writing collectively so defined because it has proven or is likely to appeal to present-day children in the prevailing circumstances of childhood.
 3. Children's literature is a body of writing collectively so defined because it appeals or has appealed to children in the present or the past.
 4. Children's literature is a genus of fictions which is concerned with children, or with imaginary figures or situations widely understood by children as relevant to them, and which is linguistically accessible to children.
 5. Children's literature is an aggregation of texts with certain features in common, which enable them to establish meaningful transactions with child readers (and which incidentally may also enable them to do so with adults).
 6. Children's literature does not denote a text but a reading event. Whenever a successful voluntary transaction takes place between any text and any one child, that text is for that occasion 'children's literature'. (Conversely, when a successful voluntary transaction occurs between any 'children's book' and any one adult, that text is for that occasion 'literature', not 'children's literature'.)
- (*Signs of Childness* 27/28)

Hollindale himself argues that, while all of these attempts at defining children's literature have something to offer to the literary critic, most will choose one or two which they will use as a basis for analysing texts. He himself claims that he uses a mixture of 4 and 5; Beck states that while none offers exactly the kind of definition she would use, the first would come closest. She broadens the definition by emphasising on the role that adults play in the process, extending the definition given by Hollindale by adding her own parts that add “and all adults within the child's culture who have any interest in children and the idea of childhood” (Beck 6) to “authors, publishers and

booksellers” (Hollindale, *Signs of Childness* 27) and further includes “attempts to define childhood and its relation to adulthood” (Beck 6) in the comprising of the definition of children’s literature.

I myself understand the term ‘children’s literature’ most likely as a mixture of 1, 3 and 4, as a body of work that was compiled with the intention of children as at least part of the audience and marketed as such, literature that is or has been read by children in actuality as well and is either concerned with children, prominently featuring a child in the text (by employing a child protagonist) or, as Hollindale puts it, “imaginary figures or situations widely understood by children” (which would further encompass works such as *The Hobbit*). These definitions will be kept in mind while discussing my selection of literary works in the chapters concerned with the depiction of childhood in relation to fantasy, as they apply to each of them despite there being some apparent differentiations that could be determined (which is, however, not the focus of this thesis). A representative definition of children’s literature should include all parties that are involved in the processes that surround children’s literature, which definitely includes author and reader, and might also include other concerned participants (such as the publisher or parents), however, as I prefer a more text immanent approach, these will not be considered in the analysis of the texts.

2.2. A brief history of children’s literature

Children’s and young adult literature as discussed today have not always been recognised as separate forms of literature. While this topic has to be considered in the cultural setting of literature (for instance, there are differences between the development of German children’s literature compared to British children’s literature), researchers claim that the beginnings of children’s literature may already be found in the late Middle Ages and early modern times (Weinhkauff and von Glasenapp 18). However, scholars have also asserted that the concept of childhood as such only existed from the early modern period onwards (Georgieva 1). It was not until the period of Enlightenment that the preconceived notions about the concept of childhood and children in general began to change, due to the influence of several philosophers and writers, and childhood began to be considered as a period of great importance in peoples’ lives (Bubíková 23). The general consensus states that childhood only became

a significant motif of literature in the last third of the eighteenth century, and children's literature as a marketable venue thus evolved into a noteworthy part of the publishing industry, with a growing market as more and more people began to learn how to read at an early age (Voutta 25; Rose 8; Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 26/27).

Much of this was due to the philosophical writings of John Locke or Jean Jacques Rousseau, who I will further discuss in the next section, as their ideas and conceptions of childhood made a substantial impact on contemporaneous and subsequent works of children's literature. In terms of the historical evolution of children's literature, it has to be noted that Rousseau's teachings are considered to be the beginning of a great era of children's literature embodying a very specific portrayal of what constitutes childhood and youth (Sauerbaum 1).

The common denominator of many studies on childhood is the attempt to grasp its essence, to define the experience of being a child and to explain the nature of children. One of the most important conclusions these studies have drawn is that our notions of childhood have changed. They have been adapted to the changes in our society and to our conceptions of what a child should be. Thus, the ideas about childhood during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries evolved continually. (Georgieva 1)

The aforementioned conflict between pedagogy and aesthetics has played a big part in the development of children's literature as well, and continues to do so in the twenty-first century (Joosen and Vloeberghs viii). This conflict is also closely related to the diverging concepts of childhood that remain prevalent even in contemporary discourse, as the enlightened, humanistic concept of childhood promotes the idea that children are shaped by the books they read and a didactic purpose is hence necessary, while the Romantic image of childhood is more concerned with the aesthetic value of a work of literature (Joosen and Vloeberghs xi).

The production of children's literature increased dramatically in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which resulted in the emergence of a literature specifically aimed at children, whether it contained a didactic purpose or was simply meant to entertain (Georgieva 2). Lewis Carroll's writings, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, clearly demonstrate that books that were written in mind with children as the intended audience were becoming more and more popular (Georgieva 4). The Victorian concept of childhood is a distinct influence on his stories, as Alice's world prepares her for

adulthood, while Carroll shows a marked preference for childhood, with many of the adults that Alice meets on her journey being far inferior to the girl (Beck 50). The nineteenth century also saw the event of the Industrial Revolution, which had a vast impact on how children were perceived by society and the notions of childhood in general. Migration expanded enormously and child labour also rapidly increased during that time, which resulted in reformers soon asking for compulsory education for children, as introduced in the late nineteenth century (McCulloch 13/14). This played an important role in the emergence of a regard for childhood as a separate time period, during which children needed to be educated and protected, as well as the fact that the Victorian time period was very much influenced by Romantic discourses about the view of children as pure, innocent beings. The twentieth century has been called very child-centred in comparison to previous centuries, as education for children grew and expanded. This included new secondary schools and an increase in female students as well, albeit at first with an emphasis on reinforcing established gender roles (McCulloch 18-20). Obeying authority and the teaching of discipline were considered vital parts of children's education, especially until 1930, after which those notions were increasingly refuted and modified in favour of a more independence-focused approach, including a new emphasis on the individual child itself and its wishes and fears. Having been called "the century of the child", the preservation of children's happiness became relevant especially after the World Wars, after which society was far more aware of the importance of the future generation (McCulloch 18-20).

It is important to regard children's literature in a context, as all three works that I have chosen to analyse in the later part of this thesis emerged at very different points during the twentieth century. However, the context I am most interested in analysing is not so much the historical background of each period (as one might argue that *Peter Pan*, the *Narnia* series and *His Dark Materials* are all clearly connected to their respective time of development and publishing), but the inherent ideologies of the time as represented by the depiction of the child, childhood as a concept and the transition into adulthood. Those aspects of the evolution of the childhood portrayal in children's literature will be discussed in the following section.

2.3. The Romantic child and its origins

The depiction of childhood in literature has long been the focus of literary criticism and research, which owes to the fact that children in literature have been used to express a wide variety of ideologies and purposes. Writers have used their own literary construction of childhood and children in characters meant to convey a broad range of functions such as “instruction, allegory, pathos, escapism, satire, identification, demonization, or idealization” (Gavin, *An Introduction* 2). In the seventeenth century, parents and educators began to be more aware of the principles behind the raising of children, which resulted in the development of educational theory (Smith 36). However, as mentioned beforehand, it was only the last third of the eighteenth century that saw the most significant changes to date in the understanding and portrayal of childhood, not only in literature but also in art and family life. An important figure for the early movement was the philosopher John Locke whose writings (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education* as the most influential of them) were published in the late seventeenth century. He views each child as being born with a “blank sheet” (McCulloch 9). They are not marked by original sin; instead, the infant’s mind is called a *tabula rasa* and Locke voices his conviction that children should be taught and shaped by their parents towards “virtue, rationality and reason” (Gavin, *An Introduction* 6/7), implying a belief that children should really grow up as soon as possible, as their ultimate purpose in life is to become adults (Gavin, *An Introduction* 7). However, this also proved to be an important influence on the view of children as “unique beings with their own idiosyncrasies, rather than [...] as small adults” (McCulloch 9). Locke’s perception of childhood therefore played a significant factor in the rise of books specifically written for children, and also served as a foundation for a general increased emotional investment in children, which was not as pronounced before, due to, among other things, the high mortality rate of children. Locke’s teachings came at a time when the mortality rate was already decreasing, which was an added factor in this gradual change of awareness (McCulloch 9). The eighteenth century came to be the central turning point to a new, more positive view of the child, which was expressed by books that increasingly depicted portrayals of innocent and pure children:

[It] became a period of transition, of which childhood was the supreme symbol, celebrating the cult of Nature, the purity of mind and soul, and the triumph of innate goodness. [...] The period saw the emergence of the idea that in childhood, the concepts of imagination, sensibility and nature were joined in one. (Georgieva 2)

Aside from John Locke, the other philosopher often mentioned as one of the “discoverers of childhood” (Lesnik-Oberstein 26) is Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose writings in *Emile or On Education*, although they are often cited alongside Locke’s, do have a significantly different view of some aspects. Where Locke proposes that reading and the encouragement of imagination play an important part in the development of children, Rousseau deemphasises the educational aspect of children’s evolution, instead choosing to focus on the importance of nature (McCulloch 10). The childhood ideal proposed by Rousseau describes children as inherently good, pure beings that can only be corrupted by their environment. Rather than being educated solely by books, Rousseau recommends that children should have the opportunity to experience true freedom and discover the ways of the world, as well as reason (a concept that Locke focused on) by themselves, with additional guidance by a “responsive tutor” (Gavin, *An Introduction* 7). It is worth mentioning that Locke and Rousseau’s writings were intended for an educated audience and did not really consider the unprivileged social class. This was due to the belief that people who were born in the lower classes had no options of elevating their status and thus received all the education they needed. This can be observed in contemporaneous examples of literature, which also aimed at the educated upper classes, where the ability to read was comparatively widespread (Smith 38). However, the poor child often served as a good example for the rich child, with texts contrasting the integrity of the unprivileged with the immaturity and indulgence of the privileged (Smith 40).

The Victorian period focused on a moralistic view of children and children’s literature, employing a didacticism in its works that was found to be quite transparent by contemporaneous and subsequent authors, amongst whom a few (such as Edith Nesbit) rejected the Victorian didactic approach outright in their own works (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 16). The child of the Victorian period was written as a symbol more than an actual representation of a human being. It was almost angelic in its appearance and character, and viewed “idealistically as superior to adults, as angels on earth sent by heaven to be models of innocence and purity, untouched by the fall into adulthood” (Wood 116).

Other writers still followed John Locke's description of the child as a person in need of being educated in order to become a fully functioning member of society (Wood 116). Nesbit was amongst the authors rejecting the Victorian didactic ways, which seemed to imply superiority of adults over children. Instead she favoured a more nuanced portrayal of childhood in her works, using language and speech patterns that resembled actual use by children and demonstrating various interpretations of children as human, imperfect and down-to-earth, instead of little paragons of virtue (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 16).

The Romantic vision of childhood, as well as the depiction that stems from Enlightenment, have been exceedingly influential not only in primary works, but also in literary criticism concerned with the critical reflection on children's literature. The Romantic child "exceeds even the discourses on Modernism and Postmodernism which dominate general literary criticism today" (Joosen and Vloeberghs xi). Rousseau's writings of the child as a nature-bound entity, while still sharing the views of Enlightenment (especially regarding progress), heavily influenced the Romantic concept of childhood (Smith 37). Other factors contributing to the new image of the child of Romanticism include contemporaneous concepts of anthropology, philosophy and pedagogy, as well as ideas by Herder who again was familiar and working with Rousseau's philosophy of childhood portrayal (Weinkauff and Glasenapp 50). However, some of Rousseau's Enlightenment-based conceptions were not really compatible with the new Romantic ideal of the child. Compared to Rousseau, the Romantic child was supposed to be far more emotional, as well as less logical, and its striving for freedom was far less emphasised than its inherent uniqueness (Weinkauff and Glasenapp 50).

In earlier conceptions of childhood it was considered to be a period to grow out of, with the overwhelming conviction that children needed to grow up, either by being properly educated (as favoured by Enlightenment and the Victorian concept) or by being allowed to evolve in a natural way with little influence by the environment (as in Rousseau's approach). While more importance was placed on the value of childhood itself, it was still essentially viewed as a time for preparation in order to eventually become adults, which was the ultimate goal (Georgieva 4). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, these notions began to change with "the rise of the idea of holding on to childhood with authors like J. M. Barrie" (Georgieva 4) and the general idea of

looking back on childhood with regret of having had to grow out of it. Many of the works shaped by this idealisation of the child reveal an inherent desire to experience childhood again, as it is looked upon with longing and viewed as a time of true freedom and innocence, and more importantly an absence of responsibility (Gavin, *An Introduction* 2). To many writers, the stage of childhood represented their “last state of joy” (McGillis 109), especially considering that most people have highly idealised and romanticised memories of their childhood as they tend to focus on the positive aspects. However, a desire to hold on to the traits that we associate with childhood is not found simply with writers of children’s literature but is instead regularly found in “the common human lot” (Hollindale, *Signs of Childness* 61). Childhood also represents a place that is inaccessible to adults and is therefore usually regarded with a nostalgic wistfulness for the place adults once knew but can never gain access to ever again (McGillis 109). Tolkien was among those who vehemently spoke against such a romanticised view of childhood, stating that “[c]hildren are meant to grow up, and not to become Peter Pans. Not to lose innocence and wonder, but to proceed on the appointed journey: that journey upon which it is certainly not better to travel hopefully than to arrive” (15).

Instead of the until then discourse dominating view that adulthood was superior to childhood, childhood was now attributed characteristics that adulthood lacked, to its detriment. Childhood was supposed to “harbour a higher level of perception than adulthood and it was only through a return to childhood thoughts that one could rekindle the world of imagination and nature” (McCulloch 10). Childhood acquired the additional connotation of being an endangered quality threatened by the dominance of the overwhelming culture of rationality and reason (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 52). This can be assumed to have greatly influenced works in which imagination and consequently magic became very closely associated with childhood (Gavin, *An Introduction* 2). Amongst other attributes, an active imagination and fantasy are also cited as essential traits of the child as envisioned by Romanticists. Other characteristics that are considered to be universal and differentiate it from Locke’s or Rousseau’s imaginings include emotionality, enthusiasm, the ability to admire, innocence, purity and an innate kindness, as well as an emphasised bond with nature (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 52). In addition to Locke and Rousseau, the writings of Herder have been linked to the Romantic ideal of the child, insofar as, according to Ewers, Herder’s image

of childhood already includes the chief aspects that have later been attributed to the Romantic child. In fact, Weinkauff and von Glasenapp (51) state that the Romantic period uses the content matter of Herder's view of childhood and combines it with Rousseau's more utopian ideology to achieve the Romantic image that prevailed through the centuries.

While philosophers like Locke, Rousseau and also Herder were indubitably responsible for a significant part of the conception of childhood that was formed during that time, many literary scholars mention poets such as William Blake and especially William Wordsworth when discussing the Romantic view of the childhood, citing them as crucial and indispensable parts of the emerging dominance of the Romanticist writings of children at the time (Beck 30; McCulloch 13; Georgieva 3; Watkins 35). It has been noted by Nikolajeva that Britain was fairly unique in that Romanticism was established via poetry in general, while other countries had seen the emergence of the Romantic period mainly in prose (*Magic Code* 14). McCulloch points out that William Blake "revered childhood innocence, imagination and potential" and William Wordsworth "reflected on the golden age of his boyhood", while also already describing the struggle between nature (which he linked to childhood) and adulthood (13). The idealisation of the landscape portrayed in his poetry may be regarded as a symbol of his idealised notion of childhood, already forging a link between childhood and the place, which has been used in many works of literature since and is a key aspect of my analysis in this thesis. Both poets played a part in the emerging of the view of childhood as a hopeful and especially pure and pious time period, with Blake's "The Child is the father of the Man" (1802, quoted in Georgieva 3) becoming well-known and a prominent image of the Romantic period. Beck further links the romantic child as described in Blake's and Wordsworth's poems to the symbolism and ideology of Christianity, calling the image invoked by some of their poetry a "Christ-Child", although she states that this can also represent "a more generalised emblem of all that is pure" (30). The ideology of Christianity is of course a very essential part of the image of childhood that evolved in that time, not only found in the works of Wordsworth and Blake, but also in the writings of Locke and Rousseau. Rousseau attempted to reinterpret the idea of 'original sin' under the new "assumption that children remain [...] innocent until adolescence" (Beck 37), stating that "[e]verything is perfect, coming from the hands of the Creator; every thing degenerates in the hands of man" (Rousseau quoted in Rose 44). The Romantic

vision of the child did not view children, as previously assumed, “full of original sin” (McCulloch 8/9), but instead proposed to turn this concept around, by postulating that the child was indeed closer to God than the adult (McCulloch 10).

In the late Romantic period the image of childhood was further challenged, and while the child maintained its ascribed characteristics, childhood as a period of life was seen less as strictly symbolic and more as an actual stage of one’s life. Childhood gained the status of being seen as a time of protection, that needed to be sheltered and guarded from negative outside influences in order to preserve the child’s inherent innocence and defend it from being destroyed by what was viewed as the corrupt adult world (Brunken 33). In post-Romantic times this image was subsequently expanded and broadened. In the twentieth century the new depiction of childhood featured a child that was considerably less subservient to the established authority (something that had not been questioned before) and childhood was now clearly portrayed as a period of life which was regarded as being truly autonomous and therefore superior to all other stages of growth (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 110). Watkins (35) points out that many contemporary novels that feature a child wiser than the adults that should actually protect and guide it, trace back to the Romantic revaluation of childhood. This concept united the ideas of Enlightenment and Romanticism, still relying on a fairly utopian view of the open-minded and nature-bound child, which was now a figure of hope in addition to being the victim of adult irresponsibility and negligence. Especially with multiculturalism becoming a theme in children’s literature of the mid and late twentieth century, the unprejudiced, liberal child was featured in more and more texts. Gavin (*An Introduction* 11) describes the evolution of the portrayal of childhood as a progression from Edwardian times when the notion of childhood was idealised and considered completely separate and superior to adulthood, “through Modernism’s ambivalent portrayals of the child, to contemporary literature’s envisioning of children as either responsible for weaker adults or themselves threateningly disruptive beings”. While recent conceptions of childhood have reemphasised the rationality and reason of Enlightenment as desirable characteristics of children, they have at least in part retained the idealised childish innocence that was prevalent in Romanticism (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 195).

3. Fantasy Literature

The Romantic child is found in many different genres of children's literature, but in no other does it appear to be as established and uncontested as in fantasy literature for children. Fantasy literature lends itself more than most other genres of fiction to the imagery commonly associated with the concepts of Romanticism, where the child is elevated to the position of the morally sacrosanct hero at the center of a story in which the powers of Good will ultimately defeat the powers of Evil with the help of the child protagonist (Gray 1). The inherent nature of the genre of fantasy literature seems to be linked to the character qualities that Romanticism deemed to be part of the personality of children. Similarly, the nostalgic view of childhood that is generally thought to be connected to the concept of the Romantic child can further be linked to the very core of the fantasy genre, the value of imagination (Beck 70; Gray 23). Fantasy literature also shares a wide list of possible definitions and attempts to clearly define the genre against related (sub)genres such as fairytales or science fiction with children's literature, which, as I previously mentioned, also proves to be difficult to define. The finer nuances of the fantasy genre will not be discussed at length in this thesis, save for an overview of the general characteristics of what is typically assumed to represent this particular brand of literature. I am particularly interested in the relationship between fantasy and children, as the fantasy genre enjoys notable popularity within the field of children's literature. Furthermore, as I have chosen three series of books that all depict a secondary world aside from the primary, "real", world, I will discuss the depictions and features of such worlds as examined by Maria Nikolajeva, whose extensive research on this topic will serve as the theoretical background for my studies.

3.1. The origins of fantasy literature

In order to discuss the characteristics of the works of children's fantasy literature that will be examined in this thesis, it is important to provide an overview of the evolution of fantasy, with an emphasis on its connection to children's literature. The development of fantasy's progress over the centuries also gives an insight into how the production and reception of fantasy fiction has changed.

The term fantasy is derived from the Latin “phantasia”, which originally denoted something close to “appearance”, but later acquired the now popular meaning of “imagination” or “fancy”, which was long used in place of today’s better known “fantasy” (Smith 8). The contemporary expression of fantasy literature is still linked to the meaning of imagination of the term. Sullivan (306) discusses that the origins of contemporary fantasy descend from medieval romantic traditions, especially with regard to some of the most common themes and forms of fantasy literature (such as myth, epic, legend and romance). The narrative structure of fantasy literature only evolved later, when the English romantics began to take an interest in the medieval, as the aforementioned texts that influenced much of the subject matter of fantasy writing originated from a medieval times when “the distinctions between the mimetic and the fantastic were less formalised than they are now” (Sullivan 306). During the following centuries the popularity of fantastical fiction declined with the rise of scientific innovation and later industrialisation and a subsequent preference to keeps things realistic and factual. It is generally assumed that the association of texts that contain fantasy elements with a less educated, old fashioned audience stem from this time (Sullivan 306). This changed with the emergence of Romanticism, when writers increasingly turned to medieval texts to inspire them and rediscovered the vast collection of ancient myths for themselves and their audience. In the wake of the revival of traditional tales and a surge in popularity of texts involving the supernatural, fantasy literature also experienced an upswing (Sullivan 306). The eighteenth century in particular was marked by the conflict between romance and reason that carried over into the nineteenth century (Hunt 16).

Fantasy literature began its evolution into the genre in its contemporary conception during the nineteenth century, when the concept of childhood simultaneously began to change, suggesting a mutual influence on their respective development (Smith 122). During this time, the emergence of the fantasy novel resulted in changes in the attitude towards the genre as its increased length affected the general manner with which authors of the time approached the creation of fantasy fiction. However, the development of new texts did not explore new ideas, featuring an increasingly moralistic and didactic approach which dominated Victorian children’s literature, for instance in Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies*, or in the works of Juliana Horatia Ewing and Mary Molesworth (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 16). This has been called “the

lost decades of the nineteenth century in British children's literature" by Nikolajeva (*Magic Code* 16). In the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the platform for fantasy literature changed again, this time with an increasing prominence of fantastical fiction written and marketed specifically for children and young adults (Sullivan 307). Nikolajeva (*Magic Code* 17) calls J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* one of the essential works of the early twentieth century fantasy literature for children, but argues that nothing of similar quality followed the book for quite some time, declaring Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which was published in 1937, "an exception". The education system improved dramatically at a fast rate, which, combined with the progress made in the publishing industry, meant that texts written for children were rapidly gaining a bigger audience (Sullivan 308). Smith (212) commends the period between 1900 and 1949 for its use of a varied collection of imaginative characters, which was created to encourage children's imagination.

However, it is the time after the Second World War that is considered to be the "Golden Age of British fantasy", with texts by writers such as C.S. Lewis, Philippa Pearce, Lucy M Boston, Mary Norton and Alan Garner (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 17). This development had its roots in the fast advancing of technological and cultural progress at the time:

By this time the modern world had undergone a tremendous change. The development of science and technology, the theory of relativity, experiments with atomic energy and the first atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, achievements in space exploration, alternative theories in mathematics and geometry, changed the very attitude towards natural laws. From a limited, positivistic view of the universe mankind has turned to a wider, more open view of life. We have thus become sufficiently mature to accept the possibility of the range of phenomena that fantasy generally deals with: alternative worlds, non-linear time, extrasensory perceptivity, and in general all kinds of supernatural events which so far cannot be explained in terms of science. (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 17)

While the abovementioned events and transformations influenced various aspects of the cultural environment of the time in general, the development of children's literature can be counted amongst those. The expanding complexity of the world reflected in literature for children resulted in a demographically more diverse audience for these books, as they were increasingly consumed by adults and children alike (Nikolajeva, *Magic Code* 18). From the sixties of the twentieth century on, Tolkien's hugely popular epic *The*

Lord of the Rings dominated the fantasy genre in a long unparalleled experience, and his influence can indeed be observed even in contemporary fiction (Hunt 20). In the twenty-first century, with the worldwide phenomenon of the success of the *Harry Potter* series, the emergence of newer subgenres of fantasy literature, the growth of a market for young adult literature and the increasing mainstream popularity of dark fantasy fiction that can not be called escapist and is deliberately aimed at adults (G.R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* has even spawned an award-winning television show), the genre remains incredibly popular. In recent years, numerous fantasy series have become highly successful franchises, as a result fantasy (and science fiction) are considered to be very profitable, as franchises such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek* and recently *The Hunger Games* are marketable as novels, films and television (there are numerous adaptations of *Peter Pan*, a recent film adaptation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, along with a previous BBC adaptation, and the first of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy has also been put to film), and various spin-off products such as videogames and other game media, conventions and even theme parks (as in the case of *Harry Potter*).

3.2. Overlaps and boundaries – Fantasy as a genre

The books I have chosen to analyse in this thesis are all considered to be part of the fantasy genre, despite some differences in how their narratives are constructed and the audience they are aimed at. All of them feature a secondary world, a term that I will describe in more detail in this chapter, but there are numerous possibilities of how fantastic elements can be incorporated in a story and many interpretations of what makes a text a work of fantasy fiction. Despite discussions about the quality and significance of fantasy literature, its wide array of subgenres and the boundaries defining them have been the subject of academic research aiming to clarify the distinctive differences found between various texts of the genre (Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 96). As a consequence, there have been numerous efforts to find a universal definition of fantasy literature and list the themes and motifs that are most commonly found in these texts. The focus of this research has been especially on images and symbols that are frequently evoked by fantasy fiction. The term fantasy literature as a whole is widely considered to be a difficult one to clearly define, as it has been heavily debated since the establishing of this expression in reference to forms of fiction that include fantastic elements (Smith 8). Tabbert suggests considering a broad range of

various possible definitions in order to grasp all potential distinctions one might encounter in literary analysis (187).

Hunt acknowledges that even though the nature of fantasy literature would appear to lend itself to an endless variety of imaginative worlds and narratives, its forms seem fairly restricted by nothing other, it would seem, than the limits of human imagination (2). He points out that the appearances that the vast majority of fantasy literature takes are indeed rather limited. It appears that authors fall back on the same devices countless writers have used before, although many attempt to diversify those motifs by adding a new element. Clichés dominate much of the texts the genre produces, perhaps most famously the so-called “sword and sorcery” fantasy, which is probably the most noticeable form of fantasy that is commonly almost exclusively associated with the fantasy genre (Hunt 2). The conventions of this particular subgenre usually include “young, questing heroes, wise controlling sages, irredeemably evil monsters, and [...] damsels in distress” (2), which has led to such an excess of stories featuring some of these characters that the most noteworthy newer texts in this genre increasingly either subvert these tropes (as in Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*, an expressively dark, violent and sexual series with predominantly grey characters instead of a heroic protagonist), add a new perspective (as in Marion Zimmer Bradley’s *The Mists of Avalon*, a feminist retelling of the King Arthur myth) or parody them (as in Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* series).

Weinkauff and von Glasenapp discuss different theoretic approaches of defining the line between what is commonly called “high fantasy” and other types of literature which include magical concepts, such as fairytales. They conclude that the fairytale contains only one magical, decidedly non-realistic world which is not considered out of the norm by any of its inhabitants. Conversely, it has been argued that fantasy literature frequently incorporates the existence of two different worlds, one magical world and one which contains features that simulate the actual world, with the conflict between those worlds presenting the central theme of the text (Koch; Krüger; and Klingberg discussed in Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 97). Tabbert argues that many texts that would be called fantasy fiction actually only include one world (Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* comes to mind), so this distinction might not be extensive enough (188). He suggests expanding the duality aspect of the definition by looking at fictional texts as depicting

different forms of consciousness rather than two separate realities. Moreover, he notes that fantasy literature often contains a contrast between a magical world that is described in the text and a rationally explaining extradiegetic narrator (188). Klingberg, on the other hand, moves away from the duality theme and defining fantasy over the conflict between a primary and secondary world and instead focuses on the differentiation between surreal-comical and mythical fiction, claiming that mythical fiction (which includes Tolkien's *The Hobbit*) depicts a world that is completely removed from our reality (quoted in Weinkauff and von Glasenapp 98). Smith notes that fantasy and the fairytale are very closely connected and both terms and their relation to each other continue to be heavily debated even today (11). According to her, the difference between fantasy and fairytales could be the idea that fairytales depict worlds that are at least closely modelled after our own, excepting the fantastical elements that are fully accepted by all its characters. Solms (19) presents a somewhat similar argument, as he claims that the worlds of fantasy are, in comparison to the worlds of fairytales, completely different. He calls such a world the *other* world, markedly different from our own, which is based on the author's imagination rather than the reader's experience.

Another genre distinction that is frequently discussed by literary scholars is the division between fantasy and science fiction. Although these genres are sometimes considered to be fully separate and able of standing on their own, science fiction has also been called a subgenre of the superordinate term fantasy. More recently, the argument has been made that science fiction is a subgenre of speculative fiction (used as an umbrella term for fiction with any sort of magical, supernatural or fantastical element) as well as "high" fantasy, an interesting term in itself, which will subsequently be examined. Weinkauff and von Glasenapp (102) refer to science fiction as a text type of fantasy literature that can be differentiated from other types by the emphasis on science. According to them, science fiction uses rational and scientific explanations for the impossible that happens in the texts that make an effort to be rooted in reality to some degree. The limits of the possibilities of reality are not as easily dismissed as they are in fantasy fiction, which frequently uses "magic" as an explanation for the impossible. Hume calls the essential element of science fiction "an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (16). The difference between science fiction and fantasy could therefore be called the depiction of the "potentially possible"

or “unlikely” instead of the “impossible” (James and Mendlesohn 1). It would be a simplification to claim that science fiction takes place in the future, while the events of fantasy fiction customarily occur in an imagined version of the past or sometimes present (Shinn 3). Hunt calls the worlds of science fiction “outward-looking, speculative, consequential” (17). He also states that science fiction, for a long time, had a reputation of being far more progressive than the inherently nostalgic writings of fantasy and that the Romantic child was perhaps tellingly not found in futuristic imagination, only in the past-oriented fantasy genre (17). Schlobin points out that the boundaries between fantasy and its subgenres have always been rather fluid, even among writers, publishers and critics of fantasy and science fiction literature, giving examples of science fiction novels winning awards for fantasy literature and vice versa (4). Moreover, he states that the flexibility of genre restrictions is not a symptom confined to fantasy literature, but commonly found in various literary areas (5).

Weinkauff and von Glasenapp claim that the term fantastical literature is appropriate if fantastic images and features are used, such as characters, motifs or formal elements, which do not act in accordance with what we know in our non-literary reality. They also argue that in order for the term to apply, these elements need to be dominantly featured throughout the narrative content and structure (101). Additionally, the duality of fantasy literature is often considered to be a genre-defining element in relation to the multiple dimensions of the fictional worlds described in the texts. While the overall existence of a secondary world in addition to a primary world, whichever form those worlds might take, is not called into question as being an unmistakable part of fantasy literature and all of its subgenres, distinctions are made between possibilities of how the primary and secondary world relate to each other, which I will discuss in subsequent chapters.

Since the terminology differs slightly in English and German literary discourse, Weinkauff and von Glasenapp refer to the entire genre of fantasy literature as “fantastical literature” (“phantastische Literatur” – I believe the corresponding term in English would be the aforementioned term “speculative fiction”) and reserve the term “fantasy literature” for what I previously, in line with Hunt, described as “sword and sorcery” fantasy. The fact that the term fantasy literature (German) is used to describe the most popular subgenre of the entirety of fantasy literature (English) certainly supports the argument that this is the most recognisable and sometimes only

acknowledged part of the genre in popular culture. As this thesis is concerned with literary works that centre on the conflict between a primary and a secondary world, not texts that fit the “sword and sorcery” definition, I will point out that the term “fantasy literature” is continuously used as applied by English literary scholars throughout this paper. Hetman (16/17) describes the world of a “sword and sorcery” text as the “other” world, which is a term also invoked by Solms in his differentiation between the worlds of fairytales and “swords and sorcery” fantasy, and further states that such a world is defined by the utter impossibility of its content, with its own, non-realistic norms. J. R. R. Tolkien is actually among the first to speak of a distinction between primary and secondary worlds in his classic essay “On Fairy-Stories”, in which he describes the term fantasy as “the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds” (14) and as an essential part of a story containing magical elements. Moreover, he puts emphasis on the magical world of fantastical texts: “The definition of a fairy-story – what it is, or what it should be – does not, then, depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of Faerie, the Perilous Realm itself, and the air that blows in that country” (4). Tolkien’s essay was hugely influential at the time and is implied to have been a starting point for theoretical research into fantasy literature by James and Mendlesohn (1).

Despite the attempts at finding generalised boundaries between different subgenres, Weinkauff and von Glasenapp admit that overlaps are fairly common in various texts of fantasy literature (102). Fantasy literature in the narrower sense has also been referred to as “high fantasy” in an attempt to make a distinction between a very specific form of fantasy fiction and other various forms of fantastical fiction, such as fairytales, folktales, myths and legends (Sullivan 303). The idea is that stories that deviate from what has been called consensus reality by Hume (21) are considered to be part of the fantasy genre, with “high fantasy” referring specifically to those texts that depict the construction of an entire, separate world. The concept of a consensus reality is explained as a world which is influenced by the perceived actual worlds of both the author and the audience (Hume 30). This is very important in terms of the reader’s differentiation between the primary and secondary world in works of fantasy literature that prominently revolve around a conflict between these, as the reader is asked to accept the primary reality with only the fantastical setting of the secondary world being described and explained in detail in the text.

3.3. Fantasy, children and childishness

There are different takes on fantasy, with many critics and writers commenting on how fantasy is sometimes not taken seriously as a genre and considered to be home to trivial, popular texts rather than serious literature ‘worthy’ of academic research and critical praise (Hunt 1). Smith claims that fantasy literature, in contrast to realistic forms of literature, has always been under pressure of validating its existence (8). Interestingly, children’s fantasy literature is usually held in higher regard than fantasy literature as a whole, as it is apparently more acceptable for children to enjoy tales in a fantastic setting, dealing with realms far outside of realism than it is for adults, who are perhaps expected to have outgrown this at some point. It is noteworthy that the examples of children’s literature that enjoy the highest status in academia and literary criticism are commonly books that quite evidently aim at a wider audience and are not restricted to children, that are read today most frequently by adults and were consumed by both children and adults at the time of their publication, such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* and more recently Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42). Nikolajeva speculates that this is due to the widespread belief that children learn something by reading fiction with a moralistic, didactic purpose, and fantasy books are considered in the same category as fairytales and fables, which all serve the purpose of socialising the child and supporting the development of their emotional maturity (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42).

Hunt claims that the connection between fantasy literature and children’s literature is usually meant in a derogatory way, as both literary forms suffer from not being taken seriously (2). Additionally, he cites three of the most frequent complaints about fantasy, that “fantasy is formulaic, childish, and escapist”, and states that the idea that fantasy is far removed from reality (and this indicates a lack of quality) is simply not true. This argument is echoed by Nikolajeva who declares that she does not consider the genres of fantasy and realism to be actual opposites, claiming that the distinction between fantasy and realism is very often subject to interpretation, which often depends on the extent to which the reader is able to grasp a text’s complexity (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 41). In concurrence with Hunt, Nikolajeva does affirm that fantasy literature can be very formulaic:

It is true that fantasy is the most common carnivalesque device in children's literature, as an ordinary child is empowered through transportation to a magical realm, through the possession of a magical agent (object or helper) and through the acquisition of a set of heroic traits or magical force, impossible or at least improbable within the existing order of things (what we normally call the "real world"). (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 41/42)

She points out that the superiority of the child in such texts is owed to the idealisation of childhood, which goes back to the Romantic period and their conception of the child as pure, innocent and inherently good, only to be corrupted by adult society in later life. However, while the child may be momentarily elevated to a status of power, the ending of such texts usually sees a return to normal and a re-establishing of order (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42). The idea of the Romantic child being one of the biggest influences on the development of fantasy literature and its tropes, most notably the depiction of the child protagonist, is also found with Gray, who points out that German fairytales and thereby inspired Romantic fiction may have played a vital part in the evolution of fantastical settings in texts (23). The child in fantasy literature may also fulfil the function of a mediator between the primary and the secondary world, due to its alleged innocent perceptiveness. As the child is able to adapt to differing realities and mental states, better than adults because it is still capable of "more fluid [...] negotiations between the real and fantastic" (Immel, Knoepfelmacher, and Briggs 239), it is the obvious choice for acting as a relatable figure for both children and adults.

The connection between the alleged magical-mythical worldview of the child and fantasy literature has been made very early in literary research of the fantasy genre, although this has later been criticised as an attempt to further idealise the conception of childhood in relation to Rousseau's concepts of innocence and purity, deliberately creating an escapist venue for children (Tabbert 188). In Hunt's argumentation against the supposed childishness of fantasy literature, he claims that the association of children with fantasy is "bizarre". He argues that it cannot be stated with certainty that children are in any way more likely to enjoy imaginative worlds than adults, especially considering that such books are almost exclusively written by adults (Hunt 4). Interestingly, the value of imagination is not commonly questioned and viewed as a separate, frequently thought superior entity that holds value for both children and adults (Smith 8). Nikolajeva alleges that the idea that children are a different type of audience

than adults does exist and influences writers of fantasy literature. She states that children are often thought to be more open to fantastical elements in stories in that they “[have] not yet discovered any form distinction between reality and imagination [and do] not dismiss magical worlds and events as implausible” (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42) which results in an open-mindedness about the existence of secondary worlds that adults might not possess. This argument is refuted by Hunt, claiming that this view is “patronizing” (6). He further states that a certain paradox exists between the adult’s desire to maintain some elements of their childhood (as implied by Romanticism) and the rejection of anything deemed to be childish and therefore not suitable for adulthood (4). Moreover, he implies, using C. S. Lewis’ argumentation, that exactly this desire to be “grown up” and the fear of seeming childish are usually considered to be aspects of childhood and adolescence, to be outgrown as an adult (Hunt 4). Nevertheless, fantastic worlds in children’s literature are frequently criticised on the grounds that an inventive, imaginative world and narrative therein do not stand on their own but are instead examined for further meaning, again underlining the argument that children’s literature must have a didactic purpose (Hunt 5). Tolkien, in his early essay “On Fairy-Stories”, likewise claims that the reasoning behind the supposed link between children and fantasy is flawed, connecting this line of thinking with Romanticist ideologies:

Among those who still have enough wisdom not to think fairy-stories pernicious, the common opinion seems to be that there is a natural connexion between the minds of children and fairy-stories, of the same order as the connexion between children’s bodies and milk. I think this is an error; at best an error of false sentiment, and one that is therefore most often made by those who, for whatever private reason (such as childlessness), tend to think of children as a special kind of creature, almost a different race, rather than as normal, if immature, members of a particular family, and of the human family at large. (Tolkien 11)

The lack of sexuality and seeming absence of shades of grey in the distinction between good and evil are also used as arguments to support the notion that fantasy literature employs a much more simplified narrative than realistic literature (although I would argue that there have probably always been exceptions to this, perhaps most famously G.R.R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* book series in the last decades). Therefore, the argument of fantasy literature being “escapist” has been made, and its connection to childhood thus been strengthened: According to some literary critics, these elements have no place in fantasy literature because they bear no relevance to children and do not

fit in with the idealised notion of pure, innocent children and the conception of childhood that writers want to protect. Since these are the same elements missing in adult genre fantasy, fantasy as a whole is consequently considered a matter for children (Hunt 6). Of course, the argument that literature is escapist can be made for all fiction in general just as well as for fantasy literature in particular and is, Hunt argues, not at all accurate (7).

Hume (159) discusses the difference between fantasy literature and realistic literature as part of a spectrum rather than viewing each form of literature as an entirely separate genre. Moreover, she argues that the fantasy element in literature is far more common than narrow definitions of fantasy would suggest, claiming that fantasy can be part of the narrative structure of a text via action, character or idea and that the appearance of the fantastical element in any of these would demonstrate the possibility of fantasy. However, it has to be noted that Hume defines fantasy as an impulse, rather than a variation of genre and includes allegory, symbols and metaphors as expressions of fantasy (30).

The idea that fantasy literature is inherently more suitable for children because the world stands on its own and does not require existing world knowledge is ignoring the relationship that every imagined world, as fantastical as it might be, inevitably has to the real world, or as Hunt puts it: “Fantasy is, because of its relationship to reality, very *knowing*: alternative worlds must *necessarily* be related to, and comment on, the real world” (7). It is interesting to note that the idea that children can connect to mythical worlds in ways that adults can not appears to be at least partly related to the Romantic idealisation of childhood and their view of the child as having a connection with nature and the mystical that adults do not. On the other hand, Nikolajeva (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42) claims that there are differences between fantasy literature aimed at children and fantasy literature aimed at adults, which are more complex than the rather simplistic view that a child protagonist signifies a book for children and an adult protagonist implies that the book should only be read by adults (*The Hobbit* would be an example for a book aimed at children with an adult protagonist, even if that character is a fantastic creature). She argues that “the best examples of fantasy for children use the fantastic form as a narrative device, as a metaphor for reality” (2010: 42). While she does seem to be in agreement with Hunt in that fantasy literature does depict worlds that

bear a resemblance to the actual world and should therefore not be dismissed as irrelevant, she also argues in favour of the idea that those fantasy worlds should employ a didactic purpose:

The fantastic mode allows children's writers to deal with important psychological, ethical, and existential questions in a slightly detached manner, which frequently proves more effective with young readers than straightforward realism. [...] In particular, fantasy can empower a child protagonist in a way that so called realistic prose is incapable of doing. In this respect fantasy has indeed a huge subversive potential as it can interrogate the existing power relationships, including those between child and adult, without necessarily shattering the real order of the world. (Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 42)

This line of argument does seem to support the idea that the merit of fantasy literature is at least partly due to the influence it can have on children. Such argumentation is not restricted to the field of children's literature though. For example, Hume, who is more concerned with the field of fantasy literature as a whole with no particular emphasis on children's literature, discusses the reasons why writers would choose the fantasy genre as a setting for their fiction and what the audience stands to gain from reading fantasy literature. However, literary critics do seem to be aware of children as the audience of books in a more acute way than of adults and appear to assign a power of influence over this intended audience to literary texts, as evidenced by the multitude of studies seeking to prove the merits of children reading beyond pure entertainment value.¹

3.4. Maria Nikolajeva's Magic Code – The concept of the other world in fantasy literature

As discussed in previous chapters, the existence of one or more secondary worlds in fantasy literature, whichever form they might take, is at the very core of its definition. Many literary works in the fantasy genre display a clash between the fantastic elements of the secondary, "other" world in which these elements are not questioned (Hunt 11) and the realistic primary world. Nikolajeva (*Magic Code* 35)² separates the term from the visiting of foreign planets in science fiction by defining magic as the most important

¹ An example would be a study of how the reading of *Harry Potter* (among other fictional texts) might increase empathy in children. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/sep/07/reading-fiction-empathy-study>, 21.07.2013

² In section 3.4 the page numbers refer to Maria Nikolajeva's *The Magic Code*, unless otherwise indicated.

element of the secondary world. The secondary world in fantasy can also be accessed by magic, unlike science fiction, which uses (albeit fictional) scientific devices to travel to other worlds and, in Nikolajeva's words, "may assume almost any conceivable form" (36). Secondary worlds in fantasy literature are intended to be somewhere beyond the reader's understanding of the world, and their relationship to the primary world may not be given in the text (43). While some worlds may be mapped out in detail, it is rarely explained in the text if the land the protagonists are visiting is an entirely different planet or a more mythical realm between the planes of existence. This may be at least partly due to the often symbolic nature of the secondary worlds described in fantasy literature. Among the possible physical representations that secondary worlds might take are the planet (typically much more commonly found in science fiction than in high fantasy), the island (which was already a popular motif in Romantic literature), the underground country (usually but not always symbolising death, as Nikolajeva offers *Alice in Wonderland* as an example of this), the underwater country, the world inside (a magic secondary world situated inside the primary world, possibly even created by the characters themselves), the picture (famously portrayed in *Mary Poppins* and also C. S. Lewis' fifth³ Narnia novel *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*), mirrors and parallel or alternative worlds (the latter of which is also most commonly found in science fiction) (44- 49).

Maria Nikolajeva's examination of the nature of the alleged duality of fantasy literature proposes three different possibilities of conflict and relationship between the primary (actual) world and secondary (fictional) world (103). These concepts echo Tolkien's concepts of a primary and a secondary world, though he attributed a slightly different meaning to these terms, likening his understanding of a secondary world to an imaginary world that the "[reader's] mind can enter" (Tolkien 12). Nikolajeva distinguishes between closed, open, or implied worlds (although she states that the boundaries between these may be vaguer than her definition would suggest (38)):

Closed world will denote a self-contained secondary world without any contact with the primary world (= high fantasy).

Open world is a secondary world that has a contact of some kind, and both primary and secondary world are present in the text.

³ In recent chronological editions, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is the fifth book of the series. It was actually the third book to be published.

Implied world is a secondary world that does not actually appear in the text, but intrudes on the primary world in some way (= low fantasy⁴). (36)

The concept of the closed secondary world is compared to the genre of high fantasy and *The Hobbit* is given as an example thereof. Weinkauff and von Glasenapp (188/189) point out that this is the hardest category to distinguish from the traditional folktale and argue that the difference lies in the diegesis of the narrator and the narratee, both of who are extradiegetic in comparison to the folktale's implied intradiegetic narrative voice and audience, who are implied to be on the same level as the characters. In a text like *The Hobbit*, which contains a closed secondary world, the primary world is presumed to be on the same level of existence as the outside world; however, an awareness of it exists in the narrative structure (36). Nikolajeva further argues that if the reader cannot grasp the implications of the primary world on the secondary world, the text ultimately holds no meaning for him/her and is therefore not likely to provide a successful reading experience.

The open secondary world is very commonly found in works of fantasy fiction and denotes a secondary and a primary world that exist parallel to each other. Travelling from one world to another is frequently possible and encouraged within the boundaries of the story. Nikolajeva (39) claims that the concept is self-explanatory and does not require a more detailed explanation than what was given. However, she admits that the concept of the open secondary world can take a wide range of forms, which can be almost polar opposites. Furthermore, there is also the possibility of more than one secondary world in stories that feature an open world; there can be a multitude of infinite worlds that might be accessible to the characters of the text (40). This is especially popular in science fiction, in particular in stories involving time travel, as the concept of secondary worlds and secondary time are related (41). The three texts that I have selected for my analysis appear to feature various forms of open secondary world at first glance. I will endeavour to examine if this impression holds up to a closer examination and how these forms differ from one another.

The third concept is the implied secondary world, which may also be featured in very different ways in fictional texts. This type of secondary world presents a paradox in that

⁴ This term is far less frequently used than „high fantasy“ and is usually assumed to describe fantasy taking place in the primary world without contact to a secondary world (Nikolajeva 1988: 36).

there is actually no trace of a secondary world to be found in the text, with the whole story taking place in the primary world. Nevertheless, fiction employing this type of world is still considered to be part of the fantasy genre (39). Nikolajeva claims that the link to the secondary world is represented by a magic agent, someone or something that does not seem to belong to the primary world.

Nikolajeva (17) emphasises on the importance of some limitations and consistency in the construction of other worlds. Even magic must have its limits, for if it is allowed to be all-powerful, there is no suspense to the story, and if it does not appear logical within its own boundaries, the narrative might well become incoherent and too complicated to follow (27). Even within the seemingly boundless constraints of magical worlds, they need to be consistent with their rules: “If we see Alice in Wonderland as fantasy with its own peculiar secondary world, still this world of nonsense has its rules, allowing all the craziness, unexpected transformations and seeming lack of consistency” (33). Nikolajeva clarifies that, while nonsense is sometimes viewed as a separate genre altogether, she regards nonsense-worlds not as a separate genre but a stylistic device which may be embedded in a fantasy narrative (33).

In the stories that depict a primary and a secondary world existing alongside each other, where the main conflict stems from a clash of the two worlds when the protagonist crosses the border, there are various possibilities of the form this journey can take. Three different forms are described, namely *linear* journeys, *circular* journeys and *loop* journeys. Linear journeys are characterised by a fairly straightforward narrative: the main character travels from his primary world to a secondary world (and sometimes even to a tertiary world, which qualifies as long as travelling back is not an option, as in Swedish author Astrid Lindgren’s *The Brothers Lionheart*) (42). Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* is an interesting take on this with a protagonist that grows up in the secondary world and takes what is strongly implied to be a linear journey to the primary world in the end. The main point of this type of journey is the inability to return to the original primary world, which is found in fantasy fiction, though not as regularly as the second type, the circular journey (described by Tabbert (190) as “there and back again”). This type features what is sometimes considered to be the archetypal heroic journey, as the protagonist returns home once the adventure is over. Nikolajeva (42) points out that especially in fantasy literature for children circular journeys are more

frequently portrayed than linear ones, because the child protagonists are able to go back to the safety of their homes in the end. The third concept is the loop journey which is very frequently used in fantastic literature dealing with time travel or simply repeated travelling between a potential multitude of secondary worlds and the primary world. The Narnia series, which I will examine in more detail later, could serve as an example of this as various characters make several journeys to the secondary world and return to their home afterwards. German author Helmut Pesch's *Otherworld* trilogy portrays three main characters that travel to three different magical realms (that are sometimes implied to be part of the same "other" world) and back again and would therefore qualify as a loop journey, which also ends in the original primary world of the characters.

Closely connected to the matter of the place of the secondary world is the concept of time. Many writers propose the existence of a non-linear time and a variety of parallel times that exist simultaneously in concurrence with the idea of parallel worlds (63). Nikolajeva makes a distinction between the concepts of primary time and secondary time and calls the idea of time and space as "two aspects of one abstract, literary unit" a chronotope, after Mikhail Bakhtin. The primary chronotope thus denotes the unity of primary world and primary time, while the secondary chronotope indicates the unity of secondary world and secondary time (63). It is important to note that primary and secondary time might well be as different as the descriptions of the primary world compared to the secondary. Time, as well as place, may be used to distinguish between two different worlds within the narrative.

Characters travelling between the primary and the secondary world usually reach the other place via a magical passage, which "reflects the archaic pattern of the mythical passage" (75). This concept represents the start of the adventure and the leaving of home, which in children's literature translates as the transition from the protected sphere of the family into the unknown world. The magic passage can include just about any object or even character who fulfils this function in the text, including the door, the dream, the messenger, the magic object, time machines, technical gadgets, or magic qualities (92). The concept of the messenger, also called intermediary, is especially interesting, as this has been likened to the idea of the "other child", "[implying] a character from the secondary world possessing some magic powers or qualities, or

simply being difficult in some way” (82). As a matter of fact, the messenger type is predominantly represented by a child character, used mainly in children’s fantasy literature, though the portrayal of the alienness of such a character may result in considerably different characterisations than otherwise frequently found depictions of the Romantic child. Death is also a possible passage to the secondary world, especially in fiction which portrays the other world as the underground country. In contrast to ancient myths and folktales, death is usually depicted as a linear journey, without options to return to the primary world (80). All three authors whose texts I have selected to study in this thesis use these concepts of time, place and passage in varying ways and use them to either reinforce, subvert or entirely deconstruct the fantastical settings of their secondary worlds. Nikolajeva’s terminology will aide me in working out the structural conditions of the fantasy elements in these works, which I will analyse in their relation to the image of childhood and adolescence.

4. J. M. Barrie: Peter Pan

J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* is one of the most popular children’s books of the twentieth century and is considered to have played a great part in the subsequent flourishing of childhood plays. Barrie’s main novel featuring Peter Pan’s encounter with Wendy and her brothers, as well as the conflict with Captain Hook (the key part of most adaptations) that is commonly called *Peter Pan* is actually titled *Peter and Wendy*, which is only one of the main texts by the author which feature the character Peter Pan (Hollindale, *Peter Pan* vii). I will refer to the entirety of the texts as *Peter Pan*, which encompasses both of Barrie’s famous Peter Pan stories *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* and *Peter and Wendy*, and reference the individual works only when quoting from one of them. While originally written with children as at least part of its audience in mind, its readership nowadays consists of mostly adults (Beck 30). The book is often cited as an example of the aforementioned nostalgia for childhood that writers of children’s books sometimes display. Rose (1-3) argues that *Peter Pan* is first and foremost about the nostalgic longing for childhood of its author, who does not let his creation, the boy Peter Pan, grow up because he does not want him to. I have described the notion of the Romantic Child in this thesis and Barrie’s novel has been mentioned

by many literary scholars in relation to this concept, though interpretations may vary concerning the exact nature of Peter Pan and Barrie's conception of the eternal child.

The inherent sense of childhood and childishness of Peter Pan is linked to the magical world the Neverland, which is described in the novel as a place that can only be visited by children. I will examine the depiction of Peter Pan in relation to the Romantic idealisation of childhood that has often been attributed to Barrie, whose difficult childhood has been called a reason for his inability to completely reconcile himself to adulthood (Hollindale, *Peter Pan* xiv). The character of Wendy is perhaps the obvious contrast to Peter, which will also be analysed, along with her relationships with Peter and the lost boys. Finally, I will look at the place of the Neverland and the role it plays within the narrative, especially with regard to the concept of growing up, which is an important theme of the novel. I will examine how the primary and the secondary worlds in *Peter Pan* relate to each other as according to Maria Nikolajeva's theory and attempt to relate this to the symbolism of childhood in the novel.

4.1. The subversion of the Romantic child

Peter Pan is one of the most prominent characters of children's fiction, a recognisable name even for people who have never read J. M. Barrie's famous work, owing to the fact that the book is an important part of literary history as well as the popularity of its numerous adaptations. In literary discussions it is commonly cited as an example of Edwardian fiction, which depicted children and childhood as superior to adulthood, existing in "an idealized world of play and adventure" and emphasised their "neo-Romantic connection to nature" (Gavin, *Unadulterated Childhood* 166).

However, Barrie's portrayal of Peter Pan as a symbol of childhood is much more varied and complex than a simple idealisation of the adventurous, nature-bound child. The author himself appears to have strongly valued the era of childhood, never quite at ease with his own adulthood, implying a longing to be allowed, as Peter is, to stay a child forever (Hollindale, *Peter Pan* xiv). Nevertheless, his depiction of Peter goes beyond simple idealisation; in the end, Peter is almost a tragic figure, always left behind as other children grow up. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, while fondly painting an idyll of childhood adventures, does emphasise on the necessity of growing up, even if this is not always

welcomed. Although he is often described as “[p]ersonifying youth and joy, play and adventure” (Gavin, *Unadulterated Childhood* 167), Peter Pan is also stuck in an immortal phase of childishness, encompassing the negative aspects of that period as well as the positive.

In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, Peter Pan is described as „only half human“(10)⁵ (he is called “little half-and-half” by Solomon Caw), however, his more negative qualities are commonly attributed to his humanity rather than excused by his otherness, or perhaps his otherness is considered only another part of his childishness. There are instances, when Peter is described as having left his humanity fully behind, which would indicate that the character is indeed something else entirely (“He was quite unaware already that he had ever been human”), however, the author also portrays him now as a little boy in a nightgown, decidedly not the bird that Peter considers himself to be, so his appearance still reflects his erstwhile humanity. The author shows a varied approach in describing Peter’s position in the universe, such as depicting his loss of humanity as a relief: “The reason is that he escaped from being a human when he was seven days old; he escaped by the window and flew back to Kensington Gardens. If you think he was the only baby who ever wanted to escape, it shows how completely you have forgotten your own young days” (13). On the other hand, the other beings of Kensington Gardens still view him as a human, “little people crying everywhere that there was a human in the Gardens after Lock-out Time” (15), but Peter does not realise that they mean him. Peter Pan fits the notion of the idealised, romanticised child in so far, as his connection to nature is vastly strengthened by his “escape” from his normal life; he can now fly, because he thinks of himself as a bird, and even sleeps on a branch at night, accepting the garden as his new home. He sees himself as a part of nature, a part of the garden and its animal and fairy life. However, the inhabitants of the garden initially regard him as an outsider, an unwelcome intruder into their idyll (“Every living thing was shunning him” (15)). Peter is actually rejected by the pure, innocent life he has sought by escaping from his crib and thinks about going back to his mother, before he finds a place for himself, neither human nor bird but “a Betwixt-and-Between” (17) on the island where he learns how to be part of nature, becoming adept in the ways of the birds, although the narrator points out that “[t]he birds on the island never got used to him” (17). The theme of Peter Pan being a symbol of an idealised childhood while

⁵ In sections 4.1 - 4.3 the page numbers refer to J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, unless otherwise indicated.

simultaneously always being somehow out of place, never quite belonging anywhere or to anyone is one of most essential parts of the novels and likely reflects the ambiguous attitude of the author himself towards childhood and the transition into adulthood. Peter's growing connection to nature is depicted as positive, as he learns to have a "glad heart", as the birds do, other times the author points out the aspects of human interaction that Peter misses out on, such as children playing. The narrator often seems to look at Peter with pity, recounting his attempts to play "as real children play" (27), calling this "one of the pathetic things about him" (27). On the other hand, the narrator appears to have a conflicted view of Peter Pan, sometimes expressing compassion for Peter's struggles, and sometimes chiding the reader for feeling pity for Peter, when "[h]e thought he had the most splendid time in the Gardens" (29). The author appears to stress the limitations of childhood as well as "the price that has to be paid by those who choose to remain as children" in such instances throughout the novel (Carpenter 179). This is echoed in a later chapter when Peter believes Maimie that the thimble she gives him is in fact a kiss: First the narrator calls Peter a "poor little boy" (58), but immediately stresses that Peter is not a boy to pity, pointing out how Maimie begins to admire him when Peter tells her of his adventures. The fact that Peter is considered perhaps the ultimate child despite not being regarded wholly human makes him a happy being, and it is indicated that he is much happier for it than the reader of the book, as the reader is happier than his or her own parents. In this instance it appears as though the narrator is specifically talking to a child reader, which is not always entirely clear in the text, even though the audience is frequently directly addressed throughout the novel.

While Peter's eternal youth may be regarded as not inherently bad, the text does address Peter's desire to return to his own mother, and his eventual inability to do so, resulting in his dislike of mother figures until he finds one in Wendy. His experience with his own mother shapes his attitude towards mother figures in general, which is rather negative ("Don't have a mother," he said. Not only had he no mother, but he had not the slightest desire to have one. He thought them very overrated persons" (*Peter and Wendy* 90)) when he meets Wendy, who unwittingly convinces him of the benefits of having a mother, or at least a girl, in the Neverland. In *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, he expresses his wish to the fairy queen to see his mother again, who gifts him with the ability of flight to get to her. Peter thinks he is giving his mother a gift in returning, believing her to be waiting for him with her window open, however, as he

takes very long to actually embark on this journey, he arrives too late and his mother has given birth to another child and the window is closed to him. The narrator expresses his regret over this situation and once again links Peter's experience to the audience: "Ah, Peter! we who have made the great mistake, how differently we should all act at the second chance. But Solomon was right – there is no second chance, not for most of us. When we reach the window it is Lock-out Time. The iron bars are up for life" (*Kensington Gardens* 40). Although the context is different, perhaps this also works as a metaphor for childhood, which can only be remembered as a fond memory, forever out of reach, when it is over. Peter's experience of being shut out from his family is reflected in the end of his adventure with Wendy and her brothers, which again brings up the dichotomy which marks the character of Peter Pan: "He had ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know; but he was looking through the window at the one joy from which he must be for ever barred" (*Peter and Wendy* 214). The theme that Peter is missing something essential is also prominent when Wendy, upon hearing that Peter does not have a mother, feels that she is "in the presence of a tragedy" (*Peter and Wendy* 90).

While Peter is in many ways the nature-bound child, untainted by familial or society's expectations, the text is always clear on the fact that this purposeful separation from a normal family life – that would include growing up – has its downsides as well. Peter remains convinced that all mothers forget their children, trying later to convince Maimie to come with him but unable to do so when she asks if she will be able to go back afterwards:

'You know quite well, Peter, don't you,' she said, 'that I wouldn't come unless I knew for certain I could go back to mother whenever I want to? Peter, say it.' He said it, but he could no longer look her in the face. [...] She went to him. 'What is it, dear, dear Peter?' she said, wondering. 'O Maimie,' he cried, 'it isn't fair to take you with me if you think you can go back! Your mother' – he gulped again – 'you don't know them as well as I do.' (*Kensington Gardens* 61)

While Peter Pan is in many ways painted as a rather tragic character, clinging to his ideas and dreams as reality is closed off from him; there is a certain sense of nostalgia for childhood that is prevalent throughout the text. The very first chapter of *Peter and Wendy* describes the main theme of the book: "All children, except one, grow up" (69), going on to illustrate how Wendy finds out that she will have to grow up, with her

mother expressing her wish for her to stay like she is, a child, forever, and Wendy correctly deducing that her childhood must therefore end. The narrator describes her as two years old in that passage, concluding rather ominously that “[t]wo is the beginning of the end” (69).

One of the essential characteristics of the Romantic child is its imagination that results in openness towards the fantastic and supernatural. The role of imagination and memory and the relationship between them plays an important part in *Peter Pan*. Peter can fly, simply because he is convinced that he can and the narrator infers that perhaps an active imagination is all that is needed to acquire that ability (“perhaps we could all fly if we were as dead-confident-sure of our capacity to do it as was bold Peter Pan that evening” (*Kensington Gardens* 13)). The boy thinks of himself as a bird and as flying comes natural to birds it comes natural to him, although this belief is later shaken when he realises that he does not belong among the animals, the narrator warning that once someone doubts his ability to fly, he can never fly again. The unshakable belief in this possibility is what enables Peter to fly, with the narrator once again expressing that trust in our convictions might be what anyone would need to do so: “The reason birds can fly and we can’t is simply that they have perfect faith, for to have faith is to have wings” (*Kensington Gardens* 16). When Peter learns of his true nature upon meeting Solomon Caw, he loses his ability as he loses his confidence in himself (“‘I suppose,’ said Peter huskily, ‘I suppose I can still fly?’ You see he had lost faith.” (*Kensington Gardens* 16)). Peter’s imagination and sense of memory frequently blend together and he sometimes seems unable to distinguish one from the other. In many ways, the book depicts childish imagination with “terrible limitations, [which] can never (without growing up) come to terms with the real world” (Carpenter 179). Portrayed as the eternal child, Peter lives in the moment, and this is depicted to an almost parodist degree as Peter forgets nearly everything that he is not directly concerned with at times. For Peter Pan, his imagination and his reality are actually the same thing, which further sets him apart from the other children in the text who can distinguish between this, even as they experience their adventures in the Neverland. The power of imagination and belief is further called upon when Tinker Bell is in danger of dying, when Peter asks the children of the world, connected to him through their dreams, to clap their hands so Tinker Bell would not die. The response is enough to save Tinker Bell’s life; however, the children of the world are not presented as a united symbol of belief in the text:

“Many clapped. Some didn’t. A few little beasts hissed” (*Peter and Wendy* 185). There is no idealisation of childhood to be found in this example of the text, but rather a fairly cynical depiction of different children, some of which show Tinker Bell kindness, while others turn away.

When the children fly to the Neverland, Wendy notes with concern that Peter appears to be forgetting them whenever he strays from the group for too long, this goes so far that he even forgets Wendy’s name, asking her to remind him of it whenever she sees him forgetting. When Tiger Lily is left on a rock to drown, the narrator points out that Wendy cries in the face of the first tragedy she has witnessed, but Peter has forgotten the numerous tragedies he has observed in his life. Still, he does not show much empathy for the girl, as empathy is not a trait that Peter typically possesses. However, he does show a sense of fairness in this situation as he gets angry at the fact that two pirates are handling one girl, which is why he chooses to interfere. Fairness is something that is emphasised in the novel, as it is said that the first time to encounter unfair behaviour marks a child, with the exception of Peter because he can not remember it:

Every child is affected thus the first time he is treated unfairly. All he thinks he has a right to when he comes to you to be yours is fairness. After you have been unfair to him he will love you again, but he will never afterwards be quite the same boy. No one ever gets over the first unfairness; no one except Peter. He often met it, but he always forgot it. I suppose that was the real difference between him and all the rest. (150)

After bringing back Wendy, her brothers and the lost boys to her home, he makes a promise to visit her once a year, but ultimately cannot keep it because he starts forgetting her almost immediately afterwards. He forgets even Tinker Bell, his former friend and Captain Hook, his erstwhile archenemy. None of the experiences he had with either of them are allowed to shape his character, since nothing stays with him. In a way, the novel shows that without the willingness to grow up and become an adult, nothing can change, not for worse, as possibly in this instance, but not for the better either. Carpenter points out that Peter’s fate of endlessly repeating the same events were the cause for Barrie’s experiencing difficulty in ending his original play, since in *Peter Pan*, “[t]here can be no ending, only a return to the beginning” (180). Since Peter is forever caught in one moment of time, never moving forward or backward, memories

are fleeting and there can be no true growth to his character, he will never experience anything truly new that would have the chance to make an impact on him.

As someone living outside of society's norms, he shows innocence in the sense of not realising, for example, that his name is rather short or that his address is different than that of other children. In many ways, he is not conscious of his own otherness unless someone else tells him, when upon being told, Peter usually experiences a sense of sadness or embarrassment on being different. However, he does not appear to regret his choice and reiterates his desire to not grow up, even when he seems to be envious of some aspects that only Wendy or Maimie get to experience: "I don't want ever to be a man", he said with passion. 'I want always to be a little boy and to have fun" (*Peter and Wendy* 92).

The Romantic child is usually considered to be innocent and pure, which is commonly associated with a nice, near-angelic representation of personality. J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan, however, shows a range of rather negative qualities that only sometimes can be explained by his innocence. For instance, it is hard to call Peter a hero when the narrator himself remarks that the Darling family was happy and content "until the coming of Peter Pan" (72). When Peter first meets Wendy and she reunites him with his shadow, he is quick to dismiss her contributions, causing the narrator to remark "[t]o put it with brutal frankness, there never was a cockier boy" (91), although his dismissal of Wendy's efforts is partly due to the fact that he has already forgotten it and instead has convinced himself that he has solved his problem. Aside from his sometimes less than polite behaviour, Peter also refers to killing "tons" (107) of pirates, although he vehemently protests against killing someone while they are sleeping, claiming that he wake them up before killing them. In relation to the lost boys, the narrator points out, without giving any personal judgement this time, that Peter "thins them out" when they appear to be growing up, which is a rather strong implication. Indeed, the depiction of a child who objects to adulthood so much that he would not only choose to stay a child forever but also murder his companions when they do not follow the same rules can hardly be called an idealised symbol of childhood. There is probably no denying that Peter Pan is conceived as a symbol of childhood, since his entire character is based on his timelessness and immortal childishness, but the purity and innocence of the Romantic child is subverted by the author, who, despite his own conflicted view of

childhood and adulthood, gives a quite flawed and complex portrayal of a child in his story.

4.2. Wendy and the lost boys

Wendy Darling is the second most prominent child character in the *Peter Pan* novels, being the focus of *Peter and Wendy*. She is contrasted with the character of Peter, partly because she encompasses female qualities in comparison to Peter's boyishness, and partly because Wendy appears to be at peace with her eventual growing up and even assumes an adult-like role for much of the book. While Peter is the sometimes hero of the story, Wendy at first glance perhaps seems to be the child that represents the most idealised notion of childhood, as she is kind, loving and accepting, willing to go on an adventure but compassionate for her parents' worries. On the whole, she shows far fewer negative characteristics than Peter. As the oldest sister of three, she takes care of her brothers, actively trying to help them remember their parents, as they start forgetting ("These things scared her a little, and nobly anxious to do her duty, she tried to fix the old life in their minds by setting them examination papers on it, as like as possible to the ones she used to do at school" (136)). On the other hand, the narrator points out that in this instance, Wendy is not really concerned about her parents, as she is "absolutely confident that they would always keep the window open for her to fly back by" (136). While Wendy is perhaps the most uncontested positive child character in the text, it is interesting to note that she is also the one who is beginning to transition into adulthood, as her most prominent characteristics include her sense of responsibility and protectiveness of the lost boys and her brothers, none of which can be called attributes of childhood. Her youth, on the other hand, is mentioned for instance when pirates arrive near their location and she does not wake the children, even though there is danger approaching because she thinks she must let them sleep. Her inexperience with children is given as a reason and the narrator praises Wendy's bravery for putting the children first despite her fear, despite her being only a make-believe mother ("Even when she heard the sound of muffled oars, though her heart was in her mouth, she did not waken them. She stood over them to let them have their sleep out" (142)). It is hinted throughout the book that Wendy might have more than platonic feelings for Peter, displaying jealousy when Peter gives his attention to Tiger Lily, understanding

far better than Peter why Tinker Bell does not like her and offering a kiss to Peter, while Peter seems mostly oblivious to this:

‘What are your exact feelings for me?’

‘Those of a devoted son, Wendy.’

‘I thought so,’ she said, and went and sat by herself at the extreme end of the room.

‘You are so queer,’ he said, frankly puzzled, ‘and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.’

‘No, indeed, it is not,’ Wendy replied with frightful emphasis. Now we know why she was prejudiced against the redskins. (162)

Wendy, on the verge of growing up, has romantic feelings for Peter that can not be reciprocated by him, as he represents a child in its nature-bound, asexual state, never to experience adolescence. Romance in *Peter Pan* is associated with adulthood, as Mr. and Mrs. Darling’s courtship and marriage is described, and therefore closed off to the one character who will forever remain a child.

The lost boys are also an interesting motif in the text, described as children that “fall out of their perambulators when the nurse is looking the other way” (94/95). There are no girls among them, because according to Peter, this does not happen to girls, who are “too clever” (95) for that. They are part of the reason why Peter asks Wendy to come with him, so she can tell them stories and they are part of the reason why Wendy agrees to go, as Peter appeals to her compassion and kindness: “None of us has ever been tucked in at night.’ ‘Oo,’ and her arms went out to him. ‘And you could darn our clothes, and make pockets for us. None of us has any pockets.’ How could she resist?” (97). The boys who live on the island live under Peter Pan’s rule, who is the only one who has real power. It is noted in the text that they do seem to grow up, unlike Peter, and that this is “against the rules” (112) resulting in Peter taking action against them. The narrator points out that their number changes in contrast to Peter Pan who is a fixed entity, and that “at this time” there were six, who are not all described in detail by the text. The only one who emerges with a more or less distinct personality is Tootles, who also becomes Wendy’s ally when she brings up going home again, despite being the one to shoot her due to Tinker Bell tricking him when she initially arrives. The boys live on the island as Peter does, following his lead, seemingly unable to truly think for themselves instead of doing what Peter orders them to do. However, they do not belong there the same way Peter does as evidenced by their growing up and their mortality,

which is indicated in the text. Tootles, despite being the one who initially follows Tinker Bell's order to kill Wendy without questions, emerges as the one most likely to take responsibility for his actions, as he shows Peter Wendy's fallen body "when the others would still have hidden her" (125). The text portrays Tootles as the quietest of the boys and it is described that he is involved in fewer adventures than the others. As adventures are used in the text as an expression of childhood, perhaps Tootles can be considered to be the most grown up of the lost boys, as the text even points out that "big things constantly happened just when he had stepped round the corner" (113), which is actually regarded as an unfortunate character trait by the narrator. The Edwardian child was considered to be an adventurous and independent child, influenced by colonialism and imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which resulted in a stronger focus on adventure stories in general, as well as in children's literature specifically (Gavin, *Unadulterated Childhood* 165). The lost boys fit this to some degree, living parentless in the Neverland, although they are certainly dependent on Peter. Since, however, it is not parental authority they depend on, this could still be considered a sign of independence. The lost boys are able to distinguish between reality and imagination, in contrast to Peter, and struggle with missing meals, which do not inconvenience Peter, who apparently does not need food to survive, while the boys do. They are human in ways that he is not, which is why their narrative journey must logically end with them returning to the primary world. In many ways they are as childish as Peter Pan, as the author gives a very honest portrayal of children who are rather self-centred: While Wendy believes they want to accompany her because they would miss her, they actually feel "that she was going off to something nice to which they had not been invited" (169). While they ask Peter if he will come along, the narrator points out that "children are ever ready, when novelty knocks, to desert their dearest ones" (170), which again illustrates a flawed and honest image of childhood rather than an idealised concept.

4.3. The construction of the Neverland

Nikolajeva's terminology and concepts allow a closer examination and interpretation of the magical world depicted in the text, as well as its relation to the characters and overall themes of the novel. The Neverland is the magical island where most of the action in *Peter and Wendy* takes place. It is a place that can only be visited by children,

although it does have an adult population. However, the adult population consists primarily of characters from popular children's fiction, such as pirates and "redskins" (a term dating the text in relation to its colonial background), or even mermaids. The concept of a mother is a novelty not only to the lost boys but also to the pirates, who upon hearing of Wendy's position, think about stealing her for the same purpose, which suggests that these characters are firmly removed from the primary world where people grow up in families. The Neverland in *Peter Pan* plays the part of the secondary world, although its connection to the primary is rather complex. It can be debated how much the primary world in *Peter Pan* actually resembles reality, when the Darlings hire a dog to nurse their children. It is noteworthy that Nana, while not depicted as inferior in intelligence to the humans, is still given the manners and qualities of a normal dog, as the text frequently refers to the fact that she cannot speak and walks on all fours, carrying items in her mouth. The text seems to suggest that the secondary world exists in the minds of children, where Mrs Darling encounters it, but it also treats the Neverland as an actual place as Wendy and her brothers are physically absent from their home, flown through the window, after following Peter there. The Neverland is a place of magic and imagination, suggesting that it depends on the child imagining it:

[T]he Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors [...]. 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 lived 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 still in a row you could say of them that they have each other's nose, and so forth. (73/74)

The Neverland is simultaneously a place made up of the imagination of the children and the place where Peter Pan lives, a place of adventures for the young that contains all that they can think of. When Wendy and her brothers arrive at the island, "a million golden arrows [point] out the island to the children" and they are described to be recognising it, a "familiar friend to whom they [are] returning home for the holidays" (105). Peter is able to address the children of the world in his plight for Tinker Bell's life, with the narrator pointing out that those who are dreaming of the Neverland are "nearer to him than you think" (185). The island is a popular motif for secondary worlds in fantasy

literature, and a highly symbolic one as it presents a self-contained location somewhat apart from the normal primary world of the protagonists. While the Neverland is sometimes treated as a rather symbolical place, a place in the minds of children, the text also treats it as an actual world that exists somewhere apart from the Darling's home, where they wait for their children to come back to them, and mourn their absence. In the end, they return to the safety of their homes, a common concept in children's fantasy literature and most of them stay in the primary world from then on, making their journeys a circular one. Wendy is the only one of the children who gets invited to the Neverland again; therefore I would consider hers a loop journey. Peter Pan's own journey poses a more complex question, in that he always, in the end, returns to the secondary world. He was born like the other children in the primary world but left it for the magical garden and the Neverland, while often returning whenever he likes. Peter is the only character in the book that can freely travel between the primary and secondary world, all the other children have to rely on him to bring them back and forth. In many ways, he does not belong to the primary world in the same sense that the others do, he is as eternal and symbolic of childhood as the Neverland itself. His journey could most likely be classified as an endless loop, since he keeps visiting the primary world to find new companions but never actually stays.

It is slightly unclear in the story, if the time in the primary and secondary world moves in a linear way or if there is a difference. The concept of time in the Neverland itself is not entirely apparent within the constraints of the story. Even as they are on their way of flying to the island, time begins to become indistinct to the children, as they lose how much time has already passed on their flight: "But how long ago? They were flying over the sea before this thought began to disturb Wendy seriously. John thought it was their second sea and their third night" (102). Their journey certainly appears to be rather long, given that the children are frequently at danger of falling asleep mid-air, relying on Peter to catch them from falling. Peter even leaves them sometimes to experience "some adventure" (104) of which he tells them upon returning, which would indicate that the journey lasts even longer than Wendy and her brothers feel. Time on the island is described as something subjective, dependent on Peter Pan, whose absence strongly affects the island, rendering it almost asleep ("But with the coming of Peter, who hates lethargy, they are all under way again: if you put your ear to the ground now, you would hear the whole island seething with life" (112)). The narrator differentiates between

time in the Neverland and what he calls the mainland (the primary world), saying that it works quite differently than normal time, because the island has more suns and moons, and is probably subject to different rules because of it. Wendy does not appear to give much thought to the fact that her parents are waiting for her somewhere, yet she is already in danger of forgetting them. The crocodile that has swallowed a ticking clock is an interesting symbol of time, or perhaps old age and death: “‘Some day,’ said Smee, ‘the clock will run down, and then he’ll get you.’ Hook wetted his dry lips. ‘Aye,’ he said, ‘that’s the fear that haunts me’” (120). In comparison, Peter never thinks about death until he is alone on the lagoon and sacrifices himself for Wendy by letting her fly away with the kite, and even then he is only afraid for a second:

A tremor ran through him, like a shudder passing over the sea; but on the sea one shudder follows another till there are hundreds of them, and Peter felt just the one. Next moment he was standing erect on the rock again, with that smile on his face and a drum beating within him. It was saying, ‘To die will be an awfully big adventure.’ (152)

It is entirely unclear how much time passes between the children’s flight and their return, but the narrator does claim that it has been quite some time (“our characters had taken heartless flight so long ago” (207)).

The magical passage that the characters use to get to the Neverland could be considered to be flying, which is mentioned as a possibility by Nikolajeva, however, the real intermediary between the primary and the secondary world is Peter Pan, and it is him who accompanies the children on their journey and instigates it in the first place. He definitely fits the concept of the “other child” that Nikolajeva describes in her work, a character from the other world (he may have been born in the primary world once, but at this point long belongs to the secondary world) who possesses unique abilities and offers an entrance into another world. Peter Pan and the Neverland are closely connected, both of them symbolising childhood in a sense, as the boy who will never grow up and the place that may only be visited by children, remaining only a distant memory to adults, just like childhood itself (“We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf, though we shall land no more” (74)). When the children leave the Neverland their time of adventures and freedom is over, instead they will grow up to be adults. All except Peter who will remain a child, forever tied to the Neverland where he may take other children to play, but eventually stays behind as they leave the Neverland

and their childhood behind with him “so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless” (226).

5. C. S. Lewis: The Chronicles of Narnia

C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* is one of the most popular series of fantasy novels for children and young adults. It consists of seven books, nowadays usually featured in chronological order although this differs from the order of publication. C. S. Lewis himself indicated that he would prefer that the books be read in their chronological order, which is why this is the chosen presentation of the series today.⁶ The series is presently still considered to be a part of children's literature, most likely as a result of the child protagonists and rather marginal presence of adults in meaningful roles in the books and the writing style which is often considered to be aiming at children. It is noteworthy that scholars such as Salwa Khoddam have pointed out in their work that Lewis' style is more complex than he is often given credit for, uncovering the use of iconographic symbols in his texts and “how they enriched the theme of [...] what in mythical terms is termed metamorphosis and in Christian terms *theosis*” (218). Therefore, assuming that Lewis was writing only for children might be an oversimplification. However, the author himself claims in the dedication of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that he wrote the book for his Goddaughter Lucy Barfield (and named one of the child protagonists after her), indicating that the books were indeed written primarily for the intended audience of children.

The Narnia books have been the subject of scholarly research for many decades, with the Christian symbolism a strong focus of research. Maria Nikolajeva (in *The Magic Code*) used *The Chronicles of Narnia* as an example of analysing the structural settings of the world of Narnia. I will use her theory to examine the secondary world of Narnia in this thesis as well, however, with the additional focus of how childhood and place relate to each other. In this section I will also attempt to analyse Lewis' portrayal of childhood and growing up, which is why I am interested in the child characters of the novels, with emphasis on the Pevensie children who are featured in most books and undergo multiple transitions into adulthood and back into childhood. The character of

⁶ This is noted in the imprint of every book in the 2001 HarperCollins edition of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Susan Pevensie, the only former child protagonist who is explicitly not permitted to go back to Narnia in *The Last Battle*, was the inspiration for a short story by Neil Gaiman (“The Problem of Susan”), which expresses a critical view of her eventual fate.

5.1. Growing up in Narnia

The Chronicles of Narnia feature a somewhat unique approach to the subject of growing up, in that several of the child characters do grow up at some point only for this process to be reversed again. When in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the four Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy enter Narnia for the first time, they are children. The story starts with them being sent to the country because London is not safe during the war. No definite date is given to when this happens, but the mention of air-raids dates the incident at some point during World War II. The four of them are portrayed with little distinctive personalities, with the main differences being that Peter is the oldest and therefore the one the others usually defer to, Susan is the one who tries to keep the peace for the most part, Lucy, the youngest is lively and joyous and Edmund, perhaps the most individually drawn character in this novel actually fills an almost villainous role during the first part of the adventure. He seems to resent having to do as Peter says, and at the same time is jealous that Lucy, as the youngest, is protected. In the beginning he is the one who seems most unhappy about their move to the countryside, chiding Susan for telling him to go to bed (“Trying to talk like Mother” (Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 10))⁷ and complaining about the rain the next day. When Lucy tells them of her adventure in Narnia, he is not only disbelieving but openly mocking her conviction: “He sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking if she’d found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house” (*Lion* 32). When he does go to Narnia, he is immediately entranced by the White Witch, the only child to fall for her machinations (albeit being the only one to meet her alone). The text alludes to the fact that Edmund feels powerless in his family, being interested in the Witch’s promises of making him king and have them serve him (*Lion* 45). In what the narrator calls Edmund’s worst moment of the story, after returning from Narnia, Edmund decides to pretend that Lucy is lying, simply because he is angry that she was right. There are hints that he might feel that Lucy is favoured, being angry at his

⁷ In sections 5.1 – 5.3 the page numbers refer to the individual works of C. S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, unless otherwise indicated.

siblings for taking her side when he openly disputes her claims (despite knowing they are true). Peter and Susan both agree that Lucy is the more trustworthy of the two (*Lion* 55). Despite his behaviour during the first half of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the text does point out that Edmund does not really want any bad to happen to his siblings, as he is incapable of believing the Witch would actually harm them permanently. Edmund's resentment and his inherent innocence are in a way both attributed to his youth, with the latter serving as an excuse for the former. On the other hand, the text does suggest that "deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel" (*Lion* 99), suggesting a much deeper darkness within his character than most of the text would imply.

Edmund is not the only child in the Narnia series who misbehaves at some points of the story, for instance, his uncle Digory is the one to free the witch from her restraints in *The Magician's Nephew* the first place, unleashing her evil powers not only on his own world but eventually on Narnia itself before it is even born, and his cousin Eustace spends the better part of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* being generally insufferable and a nuisance for all involved. Yet I would argue that there is no actual growth in the children's personalities, or any organic development of their character. All of them experience a change of hearts and emerge as better persons, though largely not through personal growth, but due to the influence of Aslan's goodness. After Aslan shows them their own failures, they do not fall back into old habits, implicitly trusting his judgement. Nor are their moral weaknesses mentioned again or considered part of their personalities. In a way, the books draw a rather simplistic image of children whose innocence protects them from ever being considered truly flawed in any way. All they need is to trust in Aslan in order to be good, who points out their morality to them and tells them what is right and wrong. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory longs to save his mother from an illness, but refrains from stealing an apple that could save her life because he promised Aslan not to and is hence rewarded with an apple he is allowed to pluck that saves her life. Edmund's betrayal is forgiven as Aslan sacrifices himself in his stead (evoking strong Christian symbolism) and is welcomed back by his siblings with open arms.

The fact that the youngest of the Pevensie children, Lucy, might be considered to have a slightly deeper connection to Narnia at times than her siblings is interesting ("She was

drinking in everything even more deeply than the others” (*Battle* 175)), since this could be related to the fact that the children are only allowed to visit Narnia as long as they are young. Of the four Pevensie children it is Lucy, the youngest, who develops the strongest rapport with Aslan and maintains this connection even in *The Last Battle*, although she is not the youngest character in Narnia anymore (as Eustace and Jill are both younger than her). Of all the Pevensie children, Lucy is the only one who is able to enter the land three times in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; her brother Edmund (the next youngest) does it twice. The oldest siblings, Peter and Susan, only enter once and leave again at the end of the novel. It is Lucy who feels a sense of adventure and tries to open the presumed to be locked door, discovering the magical passage that is the wardrobe, which takes her into Narnia. Lucy is portrayed very positively throughout the books, for instance, her kindness is enough to shake Mr Tumnus’ conscience when he betrays her to the White Witch, which saves her (“I hadn’t known what Humans were like before I met you. Of course I can’t give you up to the Witch; not now that I know you” (*Lion* 27). However, she is not depicted without flaws, as she focuses only on the wounded Edmund after the battle and has to be reminded by Aslan that others might need her attention. The books hint at a slight rivalry with Susan in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, like there is a rivalry between Peter and Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Lucy looks at the book of magic and sees a spell that could make her more beautiful, which in itself interests Lucy but not so much as the thought of being more beautiful than Susan:

Then it changed and Lucy, still beautiful beyond the lot of mortals, was back in England. And Susan (who had always been the beauty of the family) came home from America. The Susan in the picture looked exactly like the real Susan only plainer and with a nasty expression. And Susan was jealous of the dazzling beauty of Lucy, but that didn’t matter because no one cared anything about Susan now. (*Voyage* 172)

Again it is Aslan who reproaches her for her actions and demonstrates to her that the spells of the book have negative repercussions for their users. Lucy is the only one of the Pevensie siblings to speak to Aslan alone, here and in *Prince Caspian*, therefore I think it can be stated that Lucy is portrayed to have a slightly deeper connection to Aslan than the other children. Narnia seems to be connected to the idea of youth and childhood, with Lucy (the youngest of the Pevensies) being able to enter the land more

often than any of her siblings until, after the *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, she too has outgrown it.

In contrast to *Peter Pan*, where Wendy's parents are very present characters with distinct personalities, although they are not part of the primary adventure, parental figures are notably absent throughout the Narnia books. The childhood of the protagonists of *The Chronicles of Narnia* is an era of innocence and adventure, a different kind of adventure than in *Peter Pan*, less playful and more earnest, a series of quests rewarded by a life of royalty or saving the world. In many ways, Aslan fulfils the role of authorial guidance instead of a human mentor figure. The parents are rarely if ever mentioned, even at the end when their death in the same railway accident that kills the Pevensie children is only offhandedly revealed. This might be an indication that childhood is an even more secluded and independent era in the *Narnia* books, as there is no real awareness from any of the children that they will ever be anything else, aside from not being able to go back to Narnia.

The children of Narnia may grow up, but they do not truly become adults, while the text mentions that "many" would wish for Susan's or Lucy's hand in marriage, it is noteworthy that none of the four siblings actually marry, despite being presumably fully grown adults in the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It has been suggested that some of the events in the books signify the developing maturity of the characters, such as Peter's battle with a wolf which could be seen as "a rite of passage, symbolic of becoming a man", or the fact that the children's speech patterns have changed at the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* could indicate their adult maturity (McBride 60). There are some changes in the characters' personalities, although fairly subtle, that can be witnessed in the books. Yet, the most significant transformations (Edmund and Eustace) can most likely be linked to conversion to Christianity rather than growing up (McBride 60). Caspian marries, but his wife is only mentioned in passing, and there is no real mention of romance or sexuality in the books, though gender differences are frequently remarked on in a rather humorous fashion ("It's because you're a girl. Girls never want to know anything but gossip and rot about people getting engaged." "You looked exactly like your Uncle when you said that," said Polly" (*Magician* 65) / "That's the worst of girls," said Edmund to Peter and the Dwarf. "They never carry a map in their heads." "That's because our heads have something inside them," said Lucy"

(*Caspian* 132)). Even *Peter Pan* hints at possible romantic feelings that Wendy (as well as Tinker Bell and Tiger Lily) appear to have for Peter, and Wendy and Tinker Bell display obvious jealousy at others who show interest in the boy. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, romance is practically absent from the novels, despite growing up, the Pevensie children and the other protagonists retain their childlike innocence and purity which recalls the image of the Romantic child rather strongly. The ideology of Christianity has been closely associated with the idea of the pure, angelic child, with claims that the child is closer to God than the adult. In *Prince Caspian*, it is Lucy, the youngest, who is the first to see Aslan upon returning to Narnia and only children can enter the magical realm of Narnia (after *The Magician's Nephew*, where Aslan invites two adults into Narnia who become the first king and queen), which is also closely associated with God, as it is considered Aslan's kingdom. Childhood in C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* is characterised by innocence and purity, as well as adventure and independence from adult control, not as an act of rebellion but simply because the children possess their own inherent wisdom and are not in need of guidance by parental figures. Childhood in the Narnia books is also connected to Christianity, with children being chosen to be the kings and queens of Narnia by God (Aslan) himself.

5.2. The Problem of Susan

Susan Pevensie could perhaps be called the only morally complex character in the Narnia books, by virtue of starting out as one of the heroines of the story and developing, unseen by the reader, into a person unworthy of the entrance of Narnia. While she is portrayed as slightly flawed during her visits to Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and later *Prince Caspian*, there is nothing in the text to suggest that she is flawed in a different or more crucial way than her siblings. After her coronation, she is called "Queen Susan the Gentle", described as growing into "a tall and gracious woman with black hair that fell almost to her feet and the kings of the countries beyond the sea began to send ambassadors asking for her hand in marriage" (*Lion* 198). There might be signs of her change of character in *Prince Caspian*, though no more than could be implied for either Edmund or even Lucy in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. She is reluctant to explore the wooden door they encounter, earning Lucy's reproach (*Caspian* 31). Later in the novel, she is the last of the Pevensie children to acknowledge seeing Aslan again; admitting to not letting herself believe it was him

even though she confesses that she saw him earlier. Perhaps this could be seen as an indication of her subsequent fall from faith and her rejection of Narnia, however, as of Prince Caspian, there is really no suggestion that Susan is not fully 'redeemed' by the end of the book. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Susan is mentioned to be in America, the only one of the Pevensie children to be sent there. While Lucy seems to feel inferiority regarding Susan's beauty, resulting in slight jealousy on her part, there is no mention in the books whether or not Susan is aware of this and there is no evidence that she feels anything less than loving towards any of her siblings. And yet, in *The Last Battle*, none of the assembled former child protagonists of Narnia have anything nice to say about her:

"[...] Where is Queen Susan?"

"My sister Susan," answered Peter shortly and gravely, "is no longer a friend of Narnia."

"Yes," said Eustace, "and whenever you've tried to get her to come and talk about Narnia or do anything about Narnia, she says 'What wonderful memories you have! Fancy your still thinking about all those funny games we used to play when we were children.'"

"Oh, Susan!" said Jill. "She's interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations. She always was a jolly sight to keen on being grown-up." (*Battle* 168)

In this last novel, Susan is now painted in a rather different light, far less favourable than in any of the books she was featured or mentioned in before. It is interesting to note that Susan's desire to be an adult is cited here as a reason for her negative change, as well as her rejection of the imagination of her childhood. Imagination is linked here to childhood in that the loss of it and denial of ever having experienced the adventures in Narnia are presented as a flaw in Susan's character, a sign of her wanting to be an adult. In a way, Susan has chosen adulthood over childhood and is thus prevented from ever entering Narnia again. This is a rather stark contrast to the *Peter Pan* novels, where the transition into adulthood is regarded as a necessity, albeit while looking at childhood with nostalgia. Still, Wendy and her brothers have to leave the Neverland in order to grow up and this is never called into question. In the *Narnia* series, the author rejects the real world in a way, choosing to send his characters to the fantasy realm, the heaven-like place, where they will be young and innocent forever. Susan, who rejects that innocence and belief in favour of material goods, is banned from Narnia, a tragic afterthought in the heroic journey of the rest of her family to heaven. However, it might not be adulthood itself that is seen as the cause for Susan's exclusion here, as the

Pevensie children's parents are also presumably going to heaven, as Aslan includes them as having died in the railway accident (which is seen as a positive thing: "Their hearts leapt, and a wild hope rose within them" (*Battle* 224)). Susan, despite wanting to grow up, is described as not achieving actual human growth in the text:

"Grown up, indeed," said Lady Polly. "I wish she would grow up. She wasted all her school time wanting to be the age she is now, and she'll waste all the rest of her life trying to stay that age. Her whole idea is to race on to the silliest time of one's life as quick as she can and then stop there as long as she can."
(*Battle* 168)

Perhaps it is not adulthood in itself but rather a falling off belief and focus on the superficial, material things in life that leads to Susan's exclusion, the wrong kind of adulthood. It is notable that the other adults who are part of the last assembly of former kings, queens and heroes of Narnia always kept believing in Narnia (and Aslan), which might be the real difference to Susan who no longer holds on to the imagination of her childhood. It is interesting that this stage of adolescence is what is excluded from Lewis' version of paradise, while older adults are not a problem. Perhaps this could be linked to the complete absence of romance and sexuality in the Narnia novels, which would normally be expected to be dominant in that time of life. Polly's statement is the last the reader hears of Susan, at least in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, however, there is a short story by Neil Gaiman, entitled "The Problem of Susan" which is based on C. S. Lewis' character and illustrates the life of an old woman (strongly implied to be Susan) exiled to the primary world, after having lost her entire family to Narnia. The title has since become eponymous with feminist research into the treatment of female characters in the Narnia books. While *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been called sexist in the past, Schakel points out that although "[t]he stories do limit males and females to traditional roles more than today's consciousness-raised society prefers" (14), the female characters overall are treated fairly well, as characters such as Lucy and Polly demonstrate reason and faith when male characters do not and Jill "participates in combat as an equal" in *The Last Battle* (14). Therefore, I would suggest that the treatment of the character of Susan does indeed stand out, and while characteristics associated with girlishness are given as reasons for her exclusion from Narnia, I do not believe that her eventual fate can be solely related to Lewis' general treatment of his female characters.

The text includes layers of metafiction and intertextuality, with the professor talking about the *Narnia* books to a younger woman, Greta, and even discussing the character of Susan, while relating the story to her own experience, which seems to be identical, implying that the professor is indeed the same Susan from the books (“This was a train crash, several years after. I was not there.” “Just like in Lewis’s *Narnia* books,” says Greta” (Gaiman 176)). The professor is also a researcher of children’s literature and discusses her book with Greta, explaining her theory that “there was originally no distinct branch of fiction that was only intended for children, until the Victorian notions of the purity and sanctity of childhood demanded that fiction for children be made” (Gaiman 175) what was deemed appropriate for them (pure, sanctified, sanctimonious even, claims the professor). The two women begin to talk about Susan Pevensie specifically, with Greta relating that she finds the treatment of the character in *The Last Battle* unfair: “You know, that used to make me so angry.” “What did, dear?” “Susan. All the other kids go off to Paradise, and Susan can’t go. She’s no longer a friend of Narnia because she’s too fond of lipsticks and nylons and invitations to parties” (Gaiman 176/177).

The professor points out what Susan must have gone through after her entire family died, being the only one available to identify her siblings’ bodies (“My older brother looked okay. Like he was asleep. The other two were a bit messier” (Gaiman 177)), and being left on her own without financial security. The text seems more concerned with atheist than feminist criticism, as Susan laments what kind of god would “punish me for liking nylons and parties by making me walk through that school dining room, with the flies, to identify Ed [...]” (Gaiman 178), concluding bitterly that “he’s enjoying himself a bit too much, isn’t he? Like a cat, getting the last ounce of enjoyment out of a mouse” (Gaiman 178). The reference to a feline species is clearly an allusion to the lion-shaped god of Narnia, who the professor and Greta dream about in a far more disturbing way than would have possibly been shown in the *Narnia* books. Gaiman appears to mock Lewis’ rejection of sexuality by having Aslan himself engage in a sexual encounter with the White Witch, which might also be seen as a derision of Lewis’ fictional depiction of God. While Gaiman is more concerned with the deconstruction of the religious aspects of Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he also deconstructs his view of childhood, calling children’s fiction (implying the *Narnia* books to be among them) “sanctimonious”. Additionally he objects to Lewis’ preserving of the children’s

innocence by having them die and enter Narnia before they can ever truly grow up by describing Susan's life afterwards, referring to her sexual relationship with a man, and living "a good life", as the professor herself calls it: "She grew up. She carried on. She didn't die" (Gaiman 181). It is not clear either in Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* or Gaiman's "The Problem of Susan" whether Susan will ever be able to enter Narnia. Gaiman's Susan dies at the end of the story, with Greta alluding to Lewis' Aslan when she does: "*Death comes in the night*, she thinks, before she returns to sleep. *Like a lion*" (Gaiman 181). In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, when Peter states that Susan "is no longer a friend of Narnia" (*Battle* 168), this seems very final, however, given Lewis' connection to Christianity, Gaiman suggests that perhaps in his mind, Susan still had time to repent (although he immediately has the professor ask "Repent *what*?") (Gaiman 177). It does seem unmerited that after Edmund's actions in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, or Eustace's behaviour in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, it is Susan whose sin of not believing in Narnia will forever exclude her from paradise. However, given the idealisation of childhood that is presented in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and its strong connection to imagination and belief, it is perhaps possible that hers might indeed be considered to be the one sin that can not be forgiven.

5.3. The magical realm of Narnia

C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* portray a magical land that is featured prominently in all seven books, which follow the world from beginning to end, depicting its origin in *The Magician's Nephew* to its ultimate destruction (and simultaneous emergence or perhaps reveal of a new Narnia) in *The Last Battle*. While Narnia as a location is far more distinctly mapped out than the Neverland in *Peter Pan*, it is not entirely clear whether Narnia is considered to be just one land or the entirety of the secondary world. In the *Magician's Nephew*, Digory, Polly, the White Witch and the adults they have taken with them from earth, witness the birth of an entire world (in the sense of a dimension, because before there is Narnia, the travellers stand in nothingness: "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" (*Magician* 117). The White Witch calls it an "empty world" (*Magician* 117), before the world begins to form in front of them. After the world has come into existence, Aslan assembles the new creatures of the land and declares to give them "this land of Narnia" (*Magician*

141). This would indicate that Narnia is the name of the entire dimension that Digory and Polly have discovered, akin to the entirety of Earth as opposed to only one of its countries. There is no denying that Narnia exists somewhere rather far away from Earth, on its own plane of existence. In *Prince Caspian*, there is mention of the stars in the sky over Narnia which Lucy knows “much better than the stars of our own world” (*Caspian* 127), thus indicating that the world of Narnia might indeed be considered to be on an entirely different planet, at a different place in the universe. The fact that the world of Narnia (and its surrounding worlds, as presented in *The Magician’s Nephew*) is illustrated in more detail than for example the Neverland, makes the world much more tangible to the reader as a solid place where laws of physicality work, rather than the almost dream-like place that is the Neverland. However, Narnia is also referred to as only one of several countries of the world in various instances, as the Telmarines are said to have conquered Narnia at some point in *Prince Caspian* and *The Horse and His Boy* starts its story with talking about “an adventure that happened between Narnia and Calormen and the lands between” (*Horse* 11). This would place Narnia as only a land, not the entire world and on the same or similar level as other lands in the realm. The books are not fully consistent with the placing of Narnia, however, the first and the last book in chronological order, presenting the rise and fall of Narnia respectively, clearly refer to the entire world as Narnia, which is why I will conclude that the name Narnia might be used to distinguish either world or land, but most likely denotes both with overlapping meaning in the full work.

Narnia as a secondary world can therefore be considered to be open, as according to Nikolajeva’s theory. It exists alongside a primary world that is modelled after our own, frequently using references to historical characters or events to illustrate time and place, as for instance the air-raids in London during the war in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or the reference to “those days [when] Mr. Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street” (9) in *The Magician’s Nephew*. The texts imply a multitude of possible secondary worlds as well, describing a “Wood between the Worlds” (47) that Digory and Polly discover, which contains a number of shallow pools between trees, all of which appear to be the doorway to a different world. Digory and Polly are able to access Earth, a mostly dead world named Charn where they find the White Witch and the empty world that becomes Narnia through this world of passages, seemingly implying Narnia to be only one world of many. At the of the *The Last Battle*, when Narnia is

destroyed, the children travel on to a tertiary world, a world not on the same level as the other secondary worlds that have been presented: “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...” (*Battle* 220) This world can not be accessed through a pool which marks its difference from the others, instead it is compared by Mr Tumnus to “an onion: except that as you go in and in, each circle is larger than the last” (221). They also discover an England within England, suggesting that this last world is not held by the geographical or physical constraints of the heretofore visited worlds, a world on a different level of consciousness (“every rock and flower and blade of grass looked as if it meant more” (*Battle* 210)), perhaps more similar to the Neverland than the Narnia of their adventures.

The children’s journey can only be described as a loop journey, travelling back and forth between the primary and secondary world (or multiple secondary worlds as in *The Magician’s Nephew*), though their last journey to the tertiary heaven-like world could be called linear, as it is fairly clear that there will be no returning from there. Since this journey is more or less connected to their dying, this is following the fantasy tradition of depicting death as a linear journey with no option to get back. As in Astrid Lindgren’s *The Brothers Lionheart*, this is seen as the embarking of a new adventure and a cause for celebration rather than tragedy, also echoed in Peter Pan’s statement of dying being “an awfully big adventure” (Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* 152). The tertiary world that the characters enter through dying in *The Last Battle* is considered to be an even better world than the original Narnia: “This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this” (210). An exception of the circular or loop journeys portrayed in most novels is the third book *The Horse and His Boy*, where the story takes place in something that might almost be called a closed secondary world, with only mentions of the world the four Pevensie children (now young adults), kings and queens of Narnia, have come from, without a journey from one to the other.

In contrast to *Peter Pan*, primary and secondary time in *The Chronicles of Narnia* does not appear to be in any way parallel, instead the author frequently makes use of time jumps due to time passing much faster in the secondary world of Narnia than in the

primary world. The first of the novels in chronological order takes place around the turn of the twentieth century, as mentioned beforehand, with Digory and Polly witnessing the creation of Narnia and the instalment of the first king and queen. The next novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* takes place during the Second World War, while in Narnia much more time has passed and the creation of Narnia is only distantly remembered as a myth, the human line of royalty having long been gone from the land. That time flows much differently in Narnia than on Earth is further evidenced when Lucy spends several hours in Narnia at her first visit while only moments go by in primary time and her siblings have not even noticed her absence. The difference in time is made explicit by Digory, now called the Professor: “[...] I should not be at all surprised to find that the other world had a separate time of its own; so that however long you stayed there it would never take up any of *our* time” (*Lion* 57). They go on to spend several years in Narnia, seemingly growing up there but turn back into children upon returning to the primary world, where almost no time seems to have passed. In a way this allows the children to experience their adventures and even grow older in Narnia without any actual consequences on their everyday lives in the primary world. When the children travel back through the wardrobe, they are instantly children again, as if they had never been the young adults the book portrays them of growing into. What they experience in Narnia remains pure childhood adventure and is only remembered as such. Time and its relation to Narnia have an interesting effect on how the world of Narnia symbolises childhood. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, leaving Narnia results in the characters reversing to children after having become adults in the safe fantasy sphere where there are no consequences to this, almost the complete opposite of the protagonists in *Peter Pan* who leave the Neverland in order to grow up. It is only after this, when Narnia becomes truly a place of youth and childhood, as the children are told, one after the other that they have become too old to return to Narnia. That would seem to place the magical world of Narnia as a sanctuary of innocence and purity, which it is sometimes accused of being. This is especially interesting when regarded in the context of Christianity, as Lewis’ preoccupation with religious motifs in his Narnia series is often linked to the lack of sexuality or romance in his works (Butler 232).

There does not appear to be a direct correlation between primary and secondary time in that it flows proportionally to each other – between *The Lion, the Witch and the*

Wardrobe and *Prince Caspian* one year passes in primary time, with all the Pevensie children once again embarking on their adventure, and meanwhile hundreds of years have passed in secondary time, with Cair Paravel lying in ruins and the time of the Pevensie children's reign is called "the Old Days" (*Caspian* 51). However, between *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* only three years have passed in secondary time while again only one year has gone by in primary time. In *The Silver Chair*, Eustace is only a few months older and meets Caspian as an old man, who was a young man in their previous encounter. This suggests that Lewis did not make up any actual rules as to how time passes between Narnia and Earth, instead the children are sent to Narnia whenever there is something to be done, an adventure to be experienced or a battle to be fought. While Lewis uses time in a way that fits his narrative, he does appear to be intent on establishing that the times are different, which emphasises the fact that Narnia stands as a separate world with rules of its own. Nikolajeva who uses the Narnia series as an example for her study of primary and secondary time remarks that "[t]ime is important to Lewis; with the independent flow of times in the primary and the secondary worlds he wants to stress the existence of the two worlds" (*Magic Code* 68). The entire existence of Narnia happens during Digory's life time who as a young boy witnesses its creation and as an old man returns to Aslan's country after Narnia's destruction (albeit being transformed back to his child self along with Polly, as pointed out by Jill ("Youngsters, indeed!" [...] "I don't believe you two really are much older than we are here" (*Battle* 172)). It seems significant that despite the fact that the entire existence of Narnia is covered in the seven novels of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the land itself does not change much more than the children travelling there. Regardless of the fact that the reader witnesses the creation and destruction of Narnia and may assume that several millennia possibly lie between these two, there are very few cultural developments within Narnia, which is perpetually fixed in a seemingly medieval era, where kings and queens rule and battles are fought with swords (or magic). However, in *Prince Caspian*, there is a certain sense of nostalgia throughout the book, with Caspian wishing to have lived in the "Old Days", or what is sometimes called the "Golden Age" of Narnia (Schakel 35). Additionally, Lewis has been criticised for his "apparently slapdash world-building" (James 71), citing the inclusion of characters such as Father Christmas as a sign that Lewis was not interested in the construction of his world so much as in the themes he wanted to express (James 71). This may be an expression of nostalgia for a romanticised past, a time of adventures, royalty and magic, and a land

that never truly changes, even when castles lie in ruins and lands are conquered, there is no desire for technological progress because that is not why Narnia exists. Narnia's purpose instead appears to be to provide the children with opportunities of adventures and testing of faith, and to remain eternal and constant while the children come and go.

There are numerous ways of passage to let the protagonists enter Narnia in the various books, and they never seem to enter in the same manner again. Some of them appear to be variations of what Nikolajeva calls the "magic object" (the rings, the painting), others correspond to the concept of the "door" (the wardrobe, the literal door in *The Silver Chair*) or the passage happens through a messenger (Aslan in most cases, though it could be argued that he is always somehow responsible for the children's journey to Narnia). In *The Magician's Nephew*, it is a set of yellow and green rings that allow Digory and Polly to travel between the worlds – it is noteworthy that those rings are the only magic passage that take the protagonist to the Wood between the Worlds and the different secondary world of Charn, while all other gateways lead directly into Narnia and only Narnia. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, it is the wardrobe that is a hidden door to Narnia, which does have a connection to the first book in that it contains wood of the apple tree planted by the apple that Digory took from Narnia. In *Prince Caspian*, the four children are simply disappearing from their place in the railway station, and learn later on that they were called by Susan's magic horn; in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy, Edmund and Eustace enter through a picture of the Dawn Treader and arrive in the ocean, surrounded by water. In *The Silver Chair*, Eustace and Jill first access a world between the primary world and Narnia, the only ones to do so except for Digory and Polly in *The Magician's Nephew*, though this place is described different from the Wood between the Worlds and the children are brought to Narnia by Aslan blowing them away, as he describes it. It appears as though the passages themselves are not particularly important to the narrative, nor does Lewis explain them in much detail. While he explicitly points out that the wardrobe of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is connected to the apple tree of *The Magician's Nephew*, none of the following passages seem to be similarly linked. The respective form of the passages in the *Narnia* series changes from book to book (the children never enter twice in the same way, except within the constraints of one particular novel), they are only a way of getting the child characters to the fantasy realm and do not require much additional explanation in Lewis' fantastical setting. In comparison, both *Peter Pan* and *His Dark*

Materials feature very specific and unique ways of passage into their respective secondary worlds. Lewis' Narnia appears to be quite detailed at first glance, but upon applying Nikolajeva's concepts, it becomes clear that there is much room for interpretation concerning the construction of the fictional land. The effect of this places the world of Narnia, though mapped out in more detail, closer to the dreamlike world of imagination that is the Neverland, compared to the highly specific worlds of *His Dark Materials*, which contain a detailed set of rules for travelling between the worlds. The idea that Narnia is less an actual constructed world than a symbol of childhood adventure and Christianity is further highlighted in the last novel of the series, where the characters experience Narnia's swift destruction, as mythical and symbolic as its creation in the first book. In *The Last Battle*, it is Death that brings all the former child protagonists back to Narnia on the verge of its destruction and they do not return to the primary world and Aslan restores their youth or leaves them timeless ("we stopped feeling old" (172)), forever pure and innocent and within the narrative thus worthy of Narnia.

6. Philip Pullman: His Dark Materials

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy possesses some similarities to C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, namely a preoccupation with religion and Christianity in particular and childhood symbolism. However, his novels, which were published from 1995 to 2000, show a markedly different, far more critical approach to both of these motifs, resulting in a strong reaction from the Catholic Church, which condemned the books as blasphemous, in response to the film version of the first novel (Byrne par. 3).⁸ Pullman himself has a similarly negative view of the Catholic Church, calling it "a wretched organisation" that he hoped would "vanish entirely" (Barton par. 23). According to Beck, the *His Dark Materials* trilogy was influenced by Pullman's reception of C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and his impression that "Lewis was so fixated on innocent children that he killed them rather than let them go through adolescence" (Pullman quoted in Beck 246).

Where Lewis presents the search and wish for a better world in his *Narnia* books, Pullman aims to give a representation of the actual world and to find a connection to

⁸ The abbreviation "par." indicates the paragraphs of the online newspaper articles that are referred to.

humanity in his work. However, his version of childhood, while definitely very different from Lewis' or Barrie's conception thereof, remains a separate phase in peoples' lives, with puberty marking the transition into adulthood as a distinctive process that clears the path to becoming adults settled in life. Pullman does not shy away from showing the beginnings of adolescence in his novels as Lyra and Will slowly begin to develop more than platonic feelings for each other. I will endeavour to examine the deconstruction of the idealisation of childhood in Pullman's novels but also if childhood might still be regarded as a significant era in them. The concept of the dæmons especially interests me as this is clearly linked to the notion of childhood and adolescence in the text. Finally, I will look at the primary and secondary world(s) described in *His Dark Materials* and attempt to analyse how they are constructed and how the fantastical elements in them are linked to the concept of childhood.

6.1. The deconstruction of Romanticism and fantasy

In *His Dark Materials*, the common theme of children's fantasy literature, the Romantic Child, is likely purposefully deconstructed. While the child protagonists could be called innocent, if one defines innocence by linking it to a general kind-heartedness and likeability of the character, this innocence is neither protected nor celebrated in the text. Especially the association of childhood innocence and purity with closeness to God is clearly rejected by the text, as it is knowledge rather than an inherent childish belief that is portrayed as a danger to the clerical society of the books. The church goes to great lengths of attempting to kill Lyra before she finds out about the meaning of Dust; it could be said that her youth is a threat rather than something to be treasured. While only the children are able to truly use the magical artefacts as the alethiometer and the subtle knife, they need to reach a certain level of maturity before they can truly begin to understand the working of the world. In Pullman's trilogy it might therefore be said that childish innocence is considered inferior to adult maturity and experience that is needed for true understanding, a stepping stone rather than a gift that needs to be preserved.

And yet, children do have a different status in the books compared to the adults – Lyra and Will are able to do what the adults cannot do, find out the truth about Dust as well as work with the magic objects that lead them to this realisation in the first place. If the children show flaws in their personalities, the adults in *His Dark Materials* range from

disappointing to vicious and cruel and even those that seem benevolent show their dark side at some point or the other. There may be no idealisation of childhood to be found in Pullman's trilogy, but childhood in itself is depicted as a state that is markedly different from adulthood and it is the child protagonists who are the most relatable characters, almost independent from adult influence. Butler remarks on the importance of the young characters as she suggests that "[o]ne way to think about His Dark Materials is as a reworking of *Paradise Lost* in Blakean terms, in which a cruel, Urizenic God is defeated by the promethean energy of youth" (231). Dust works in a different way for children and adults, seemingly connected to adults more than children (which might hint that adulthood is actually seen as the superior state in *His Dark Materials*) as "[a]dults attract them, but not children. At least, not much, and not until adolescence" (Pullman, *Northern Lights* 90).⁹ The adults of this secondary world, especially the clergy, fear Dust and wish to find a way to vanquish it, which is the origin of the terrible experiment that severs children from their dæmons. The Magisterium fears Dust so much, they agree to murder a child in order to keep her from fulfilling a prophecy that they view to be the reason that "Dust and sin will triumph" (*The Amber Spyglass* 68). They seek to destroy what they fear, which appears to be Dust, but on a subtextual level could also be the female sexuality in general, as they speak about Lyra giving into temptation, "like Eve" (*The Amber Spyglass* 68). However, as Lyra later points out, if all the adults that she has come to know as mostly deceitful and untrustworthy hate Dust, there is a possibility that it might actually "be good" (*Northern Lights* 397) after all. In the end, Lyra's evolution into "a second Eve" is ultimately for the benefit of the world, as Pullman's version of the 'Fall' is seen as "a liberation rather than a curse" (Butler 231), resulting in what Lyra proclaims to be the "republic of heaven" (*The Amber Spyglass* 522).

The fantasy setting in *His Dark Materials* is not actually used much differently than in *Peter Pan* or *The Chronicles of Narnia*, except for the added stronger political undercurrent. It works as way to allow the reader to distance him- or herself from reality by acknowledging actual reality-based themes and problematic situations. The link between fantasy and imagination is not as strong in this trilogy as in the other two book series that I have examined in this thesis; however, there is still evidence of it to be found in the text. Imagination and childhood are still strongly implied to be connected

⁹ In sections 6.1 - 6.3 the page numbers refer to the individual works of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, unless otherwise indicated.

in the novel, as Lyra's ability to read the alethiometer is related to her youth and imaginative power, a natural ability that is lost once she goes through puberty, which she greatly laments:

"It's no good – I can tell – it's gone forever – it just came when I needed it, for all the things I had to do – for rescuing Roger, and then for us two – and now it's over, now everything's finished, it's just left me...I was afraid of that, because it's been so difficult – I thought I couldn't see it properly, or my fingers were stiff or something, but it wasn't that at all; the power was just leaving me, it was just fading away...Oh, it's gone, Will! I've lost it! It'll never come back!"
(*The Amber Spyglass* 494)

On the other hand, where in the other two books childhood imagination and abilities are irrevocably lost, Pullman puts a more optimistic spin on this idea by proposing that experience and intellect might be enough to make up for the loss of innocence. Lyra is told that she may some day be able to work with the alethiometer again, though not by returning to the imagination and innocence of her childhood but by maturing further and working on her abilities: "You read it by grace," said Xaphania, looking at her, "and you can regain it by work" (*The Amber Spyglass* 495). Growing up is an essential aspect of Pullman's version of humanity, and this is illustrated by the children being forced to let go of the fantastical elements in their lives, the alethiometer and the knife. In this, the author reinforces rather than deconstructs a common concept of fantasy literature, as Lyra and Will are both chosen to use their respective artefacts and are considered to be the ones that these objects truly belong to. One possible idea to subvert this is the revelation at the end of *The Amber Spyglass* that it is actually the use of the subtle knife that creates the soul-eating creatures called the Spectres, whenever it is used to carve a window between the worlds: "Every time we open a window with the knife, it makes a Spectre. It's like a little bit of the abyss that floats out and enters the world. That's why the Cittàgazze world was so full of them, because of all the windows they left open there" (490).

A motif that is explored in the novels is the concept of destiny, which is very commonly a theme in fantasy literature. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* as a complete work demonstrates a variety of possible perceptions of destiny. Lyra's entire life is shaped by the prophecy and her talent of using the alethiometer, which gives her adventure its direction. Much of her life is also marked by the influence of her parents' respective decisions and destiny, over which she has no power at all. On the other hand, especially

in *The Amber Spyglass*, free will is stressed to be more important than knowing one's destined direction of life:

“I shall decide what I do. If you say my work is fighting, or healing, or exploring, or whatever you might say, I'll always be thinking about it, and if I do end up doing that I'll be resentful because it'll feel as if I didn't have a choice, and if I don't do it, I'll feel guilty because I should. Whatever I do, I will choose it, no one else.” (*The Amber Spyglass* 500)

Xaphania replies to Will's statement by declaring this to be “the first steps towards wisdom” (*The Amber Spyglass* 500). While Will and Lyra grow up and settle into their adult roles and responsibilities at the end of the last novel, they agree to “meet” one day every year in the Botanic Garden, despite living in parallel worlds, as a way of being together without actually being able to see and touch each other. Perhaps it might be said that this garden symbolises their shared childhood, a place of nostalgic longing for something long gone, however, it is romantic love and their first experience of maturity that is remembered here. In a sense, this again serves as a deconstruction of the common idea of a fantasy world symbolising childhood, as the children value the moment that marked their transition into adulthood above all others. Beck comes to a similar conclusion as she likens the Botanic Garden to the biblical garden of Eden, a symbol of the Fall (reinterpreted as a positive development), emphasising that “they are permitted this connection as an act of memory, of celebration of what they experienced together and of their eventual love for each other” (254). She points out that Lyra and Will ultimately have left the garden and it remains merely a symbol of the nostalgic longing so often associated with the memory of childhood, subverted by Pullman as a memory of love instead (Beck 254).

Despite Pullman's rejection of many of the Romanticist ideals, the value of imagination, though a specific kind of imagination, remains an essential part of his work. Lyra's talent for storytelling is vital to the confrontation with the harpies, who wish to hear what they call true stories, while rejecting pure fantasy. The author himself has stated that a great story should not merely be escapist, but should have something to do with actual human reality, which perhaps is reflected in this scene. Lyra's true stories, which are still not merely factual retellings, but imaginative tales that are enhanced by evocative language, are the basis for a bargain with the harpies which is crucial to the eventual triumph over the Authority. Fantasy as a genre might be to some extent

deconstructed and subverted by the author, but imagination, in his own original conception of it, remains a fundamental part of the story,

6.2. Lyra, Will and their dæmons

The child characters of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* are perhaps portrayed with the most distinctive personalities out of the presentations of childhood by the three different writers I have chosen to analyse in this thesis. Lyra Belacqua is the primary child protagonist in the first novel of the trilogy, *Northern Lights*, and it is her point of view that for the most part introduces the reader to the world described in the book. She is frequently described as a flawed character, despite being the heroine of the novel, repeatedly lying in order to get what she wants or save herself, earning her the nickname "Lyra Silvertongue" (*Northern Lights* 346) after pretending to be Iorek's dæmon in order to ensure her safety. Throughout the books she is shown to be stealing, lying and her curiosity and sense of adventure sometimes leads to reckless behaviour that endangers not only her but others as well.

While Lyra in many ways defies the characteristics most commonly attributed to the Romantic child, the book does picture her as a very independent, free-spirited child whose personality forms with minimal influence by adults. She lives in a parallel universe version of Oxford, in itself not a place associated in any way with nature (instead, Lyra appears to grow up in the very centre of education, benefiting from it directly), however, the novel does paint her childhood life as near idyllic, allowing her to roam free through the halls and places of this secondary Oxford, as nature-bound as a city child can be:

In many ways Lyra was a barbarian. What she liked best was clambering over the College roofs with Roger, the Kitchen boy who was her particular friend, to spit plum-stones on the heads of passing Scholars or to hoot like owls outside a window where a tutorial was going on; or racing through the narrow streets, or stealing apples from the market [...] (*Northern Lights* 35/36)

Lyra is described as a troublemaker, though this is also portrayed as child's play rather than a serious flaw in her character, rather a trait of the Oxford children in general. It is pointed out though that children's fighting is much different than adults would perceive it: "Children playing together: how pleasant to see! What could be more innocent and

charming?” which is immediately subverted by the next sentence: “In fact, of course, Lyra and her peers were engaged in deadly warfare” (*Northern Lights* 36). The children are fairly ruthless in their encounters, though Lyra is also shown to be loyal to her friend Roger, searching everywhere for him when he goes missing. The novel frequently points out her independence and freedom, while simultaneously attaching negative connotations to both: Aside from calling her a barbarian, she is also referred to as “a coarse and greedy little savage” and that she lives her childhood “like a half-wild cat” (*Northern Lights* 37). The author is very careful here to portray Lyra as a fairly flawed individual, with a distinctive personality of her own, instead of a symbol of childish innocence merely filling the role of the protagonist. While Lyra’s connection to the greater education system of the fictional Jordan College is remarked on, she chooses not to pursue this education, instead preferring to simply “lord it over the other urchins” (*Northern Lights* 37). Her neglect of at least attempting to educate herself, since the opportunity would most likely be there, is considered to be a flaw. Lyra’s childhood is far more idyllic than other children’s by comparison, which is the basis for Mrs Coulter’s scheme of kidnapping them for the experiment, as they follow her more or less willingly in most cases.

Will, the second child protagonist, appears for the first time in *The Subtle Knife*, where his life in his home world, what could actually be called the primary world, since it seems to be modelled after what we regard as reality, is portrayed as difficult and challenging. The boy is introduced as a more responsible character than his counterpart Lyra, as he is not free to play with children whenever he likes, but is instead taking care of his mentally ill mother (“She’s just kind of confused and muddled and she gets a bit worried” (*The Subtle Knife* 2)). In his introductory chapter, Will accidentally kills a man who searches his house and would have likely hurt him if he had gotten to him, describe as “trained and fit and hard” (*The Subtle Knife* 7), but Will nevertheless feels guilt about it: “He couldn’t get out of his mind the crack as the man’s head had struck the table, and the way his neck was bent so far and in such a wrong way, and the dreadful twitching of his limbs” (*The Subtle Knife* 7). Will and Lyra are contrasted in the descriptions of their respective personalities, both possessing qualities and flaws that the other does not have. Where Lyra can talk her way out of almost any situation, Will is more honest, but also more forceful and strong, which he has learned by protecting his mother since his early childhood, and Lyra in her carefree Oxford playground has never had to learn.

Early on it is hinted that they compliment each other, which might suggest their eventual romantic compatibility and destiny to end as star-crossed lovers. Will is from what is implied to be the primary world (which makes its first real appearance only in the second book of the trilogy), which is demonstrated by his lack of a visible dæmon. The fact that he is an accidental murderer is not portrayed as a flaw in itself; Lyra's reaction indicates more positive surprise and a sense of safety than any moral outrage over the fact that Will has killed someone:

The alethiometer answered: *He is a murderer.*

When she saw the answer, she relaxed at once. He could find food, and show her how to reach Oxford, and those were powers that were useful, but he might still have been untrustworthy or cowardly. A murderer was a worthy companion. She felt as safe with him as she'd done with Iorek Byrnison the armoured bear. (*The Subtle Knife* 28).

It seems odd that Lyra would find a murderer to be trustworthy, especially since he did not tell her himself but she found out from her magical object, but considering the adult company she has experienced throughout her life, it makes sense that Lyra would not find anything especially terrible about being a murderer. Innocence and purity play no part in the principles of Lyra and Will, with personal honour and reliability being considered of higher importance than Romanticist ideals and Christian values. The author is concerned with presenting his child characters with individuality and distinctive personalities instead of having them conform to conceptions of the Romantic child. Lyra and Will are not inherently better than the adults that surround them by virtue of being children; instead they have their own personal strengths and weaknesses.

The books that center around Lyra and Will's childhood adventure perhaps fittingly end with their kiss, leading them into a burgeoning sexual awareness that marks the beginning of their adolescence and first stage of transitioning into adulthood. The ultimate goal of stopping Dust from flowing away is achieved in the moment where Lyra and Will give into their feelings for each other and share a kiss, which signifies the fulfilment of Lyra's destiny. It is telling that Lyra's important destiny is so firmly connected to her growing up, reinforcing the importance of personal growth and the achievement of maturity as a culmination of the entire story: "The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all" (*The Amber Spyglass* 473). While they are

both portrayed as flawed individuals, Lyra and Will also show remarkable selflessness throughout the story, which is connected to their growing maturity and experience: At the end they are told that there will be enough Dust to leave one window open and for a moment they allow themselves to think of only themselves and are excited about the possibility of staying together. However, they realise they have to leave it for the dead, with Lyra stating, despite her growing desperation at being forever separated from Will: “We must leave it open for them! We must!” (*The Amber Spyglass* 496). The urgency of this declaration might be in part due to her need of convincing herself that this is absolutely necessary and there is no way for her and Will to be together, as well as her experience in the land of the dead.

The perhaps most defining aspect of Lyra’s secondary world is the existence of dæmons, creatures in animal shape that exist as extensions of peoples’ selves. They are inextricably connected to their humans, as it is implied that they are part of their souls or perhaps the corporeal form they take. Dæmons act according to their human counterparts’ personalities and intentions, with their form often symbolising a defining trait in the person’s character or the current state of children’s souls. The concept of soul in Pullman’s trilogy appears to be understood as spirit and personality, rather than the sometimes romanticised version of a conscience, where to lose one’s soul means to become evil. In *His Dark Materials*, losing their dæmon means the loss of all energy and eventual death for the person it belonged to. The experiments conducted by Mrs Coulter on behalf of the church result in children’s death, as the project could further be interpreted as an attempt to “prevent children from gaining sexual maturity by surgically ‘severing’ them from their daemons” (Butler 231). In *Northern Lights*, Lyra’s dæmon urges her to leave, without warning Lord Asriel about the poison meant to murder him and it is Lyra who decides to stay against his council. Therefore I believe that it can reasonably be assumed that dæmons are not meant to signify a sense of right and wrong, instead they are as human and flawed as their people. It is noteworthy that dæmons can change their form freely and at will as long as their respective human is a child, their form only becomes fixed when the child goes through puberty. Adults have dæmons that are forever shaped in a specific form, such as Mrs Coulter’s golden monkey or Lord Asriel’s snow leopard. They represent the adults’ souls in their final, unchangeable appearance and “reflect the true nature of the individual” (Mendlesohn 126). Pullman contrasts the fluidity and on-going development of children with the inflexibility of

adults, which would appear to emphasise the difference in childhood and adulthood yet again. However, when Lyra's and Will's dæmons settle on their final form, this is portrayed as a positive thing, a necessity that is not only accepted but welcomed by both children:

“Pan,” Lyra said as he flowed up on to her lap, “you’re not going to change a lot any more, are you?”

“No,” he said.

“It’s funny,” she said, “you remember when we were younger and I didn’t want you to stop changing at all...Well, I wouldn’t mind so much now. Not if you stay like this.” [...] And she knew too that neither dæmon would change now, having felt a lover’s hands on them. These were their shapes for life: they would want no other. (*The Amber Spyglass* 503)

The settling on a specific form is associated in the text with the love that Lyra and Will feel for each other, as well as the young adults feeling content with who they are and who they are with. The dæmons no longer changing is not regarded as a loss of childhood, but the recognition of where the characters belong in life.

6.3. Travelling through the multiverse

The parallel universes of *His Dark Materials* are depicted in much detail and a clear set of rules regarding the physicality and geographical qualities of the worlds, with an attention to especially technical detail that is more commonly found in Science Fiction, than in Fantasy fiction. Nikolajeva’s concepts of fantasy world and time are used in another way in Pullman’s trilogy than in the other two series of novels I have analysed, in order to create an entirely different effect on the reader, which “demonstrates the fractal nature of the form which can be twisted and turned to achieve new perspectives” (Mendlesohn 127). The novels take place during a fictionalised version of the twentieth century and both the primary and the main secondary world have access to technology that fits this era, Lyra’s world even featuring technology that might exceed the advanced technology of the time. The trilogy is unique among the books that I have chosen to analyse in that both the primary and the main secondary world are modelled after our reality, implied to be parallel in almost every way especially when it comes to geographical relations – the Botanic Garden which symbolises Lyra and Will’s shared

memories and love exists in both of their worlds and remains a meeting point for them, at least in spirit after they part ways at the end of *The Amber Spyglass*.

Similarly to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the text implies an infinite multitude of universes, some of which might be close imitations of one another, like Lyra's and Will's versions of Oxford, which differ in details but are still both essentially Oxford, and vastly different worlds such as Cittàgazze and the world of the dead. While Cittàgazze appears to be a similar parallel universe such as Lyra and Will's worlds, the world of the dead is on another level, and has different rules for entering and leaving it (related to elements of Greek mythology). In Cittàgazze, Lyra and Will hear of the Spectres, ghoulis creatures that devour adolescents and adults, but are invisible to children, which is why the city is full of free roaming children when Lyra and Will arrive there ("when a Spectre catch a grown-up, that's bad to see. They eat the life out of them there and then, all right" (*The Subtle Knife* 60)). It is later explained that Spectres are connected to Dust and that every time Will cuts a window through a world a Spectre emerges. The Spectres start preying on children on the verge of adolescence until the moment they come of age, which is when they consume them. This specific moment when children transition into adolescents is often emphasised throughout the book and is of great importance to a variety of events, such as the loss of the dæmons' shapeshifting abilities and at the culmination of Lyra's personal destiny, the reversal of the flow of Dust.

The first novel of the trilogy, *Northern Lights*, takes place in a closed secondary world, a world full of fantasy elements that, while showing strong similarities, is different from our own, most notably in the existence of dæmons as corporeal forms of one's soul. In *The Subtle Knife*, Will's world is introduced, which is strongly implied to be the primary world, i.e. the world of the reader, resembling reality. With the possession of the subtle knife, the children are able of entering almost any world that they want and they travel through a multitude of worlds, also frequently going back to ones they already visited. Their way of travelling could most conceivably be called a huge loop journey, which includes secondary and tertiary worlds, with the participants ending up in the world they originally came from. The magic passage varies throughout the books, but whichever object or power they use to access other worlds, it is always through what is called a window between the worlds. These windows that most prominently

may be cut with the subtle knife (making it a sought after magic object) function as portals and there are specific rules in place about their use. While place is an important concept in the novels, time is less so, as there is no real mention of any differences in time throughout the parallel worlds. It is implied that time goes at the exact same flow, since they also all share the same physical properties, most importantly indicated by the existence of Dust in every one of them.

Dust remains a rather mysterious matter throughout most of the novels, despite it being a key element of setting the narrative in motion. Although Dust is a constant in the thoughts and fears of the characters, the question as to what it actually signifies is not answered until the end of the books by the angel Xaphania: “Dust is not a constant. There’s not a fixed quantity that has always been the same. Conscious beings make Dust – they renew it all the time, by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing it on” (*The Amber Spyglass* 496). Dust, as the most important magic element of the fictional worlds in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* is interestingly portrayed as having a stronger connection to adults than children, as it is described as an expression of consciousness and wisdom. It might be suggested by the text that Dust is related to knowledge, resulting in the Church’s fear and antagonism towards the matter.

Despite the numerous differences between the three book series that I have examined in this thesis, there are some clear similarities in how they end: The cause might be diverse in each case, but all child protagonists lose the ability to travel between the primary and secondary worlds and presumably start their adolescent lives in the world they came from (this was also the ending of each book in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, until *The Last Battle*), settling into their new responsibilities and bidding their childhood adventures goodbye. In *His Dark Materials* it is not so much the secondary fantasy world that symbolises childhood, but it is the freedom and independence of travelling between the worlds, the journey itself and the ability of travelling that is lost at the end of childhood. In a way this is also true of the other works I have analysed, however, Pullman’s trilogy differs from the other books in that travelling between the worlds is stopped out of necessity as it endangers the world (and it would still theoretically be possible), so it is not an inherent ability of childhood that is lost (to either a gradual loss of childish imagination, as in *Peter Pan* or because Aslan’s rules prevent it, as in the *Narnia*

series). Childhood is also reflected in the ever-changing shape of the children's dæmons, as in Pullman's universe childhood is a state of fluctuation, during which the characters find out who they will be for the rest of their lives. A crucial difference to the other books is the assumption that the characters of *His Dark Materials* will always remember the other worlds and their journeys, not simply as a part of imagination but as real, actual lands that have been visited and what is longingly missed is not so much their childhood but who and what they have lost after it was over.

7. Conclusion

Children and fantasy have been connected in literature, by authors, critics and readers, since the emergence of children's literature as a separate genre. In this thesis I attempted to provide a detailed analysis of how the concepts of childhood and fantasy are linked in three main primary texts of children's literature: J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. I aimed to present an overview of the literary portrayal of children in these books, as well as the texts' approach to the depiction and interpretation of the process of growing up and adolescence as well as adulthood.

To give an understanding of the subject matter I was working with, I first examined critical approaches to children's literature, discussing the numerous attempts of finding a satisfying definition of the genre. Despite the many factors that play a part in defining the meaning of children's literature, there have been comprehensive studies that determined applicable working definitions of what the term entails. The works I have looked at during this thesis are all considered to be part of children's literature, most by virtue of being written with children as the eventual audience in mind, although Pullman specifically stated that he aimed at a broader range of readers when writing *His Dark Materials*. While the readership of these texts today will most likely include far more adults and adolescents than actual children, I still consider them to be books for children as per Hollindale's definition: All of them are primarily concerned with children and childhood and all of them use fantasy and imaginary figures and situations as a way to appeal to the child reader.

I gave a brief overview of the history of children's literature because it is important to understand when and how texts intended primarily for children were developed, as I wanted to provide a historical background for the evolution of Romanticism in children's literature, which is the main focal point of my thesis. The idealisation of childhood that stems from Romanticist ideas, which were influenced by Locke and Rousseau (among others), combined with its association with innocence and purity, affects all the texts I have analysed, albeit in a variety of ways. While the Romantic child is certainly seen in the depiction of the character of Peter Pan in Barrie's work, the author portrays the child with a surprising amount of honesty as to what being a child actually entails and does not shy away from describing Peter's negative traits that make him one of the most complex representations of a child in children's literature. Lewis' work is closely connected to the symbols and concepts of Christianity, which is reflected in his representation of childhood and adolescence. His child characters grow, but they arguably are not depicted as growing up. There is no noticeable difference between childhood and adolescence in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, except in the case of Susan, whose problematic treatment I have questioned and analysed in a separate section. Susan is the only character in the series that is described as showing somewhat stereotypical behaviour commonly associated with adolescence and as a result she is denied all remnants of a connection to Narnia. In a sense, the text seems to suggest that to grow up and to become an adolescent is to betray childhood. However, as illustrated in previous sections, aside from Susan, Lewis largely portrays his child characters as either inherently virtuous or exhibiting flaws and subsequently earning redemption for them, for the most part due to Aslan's guidance. In Lewis' work, the by Romanticists alleged closeness of the child to God manifests itself on the various occasions that children are chosen to be the saviours of Narnia by Aslan. Ideals of the Romantic child in correlation with the ideology of Christianity can also be seen as influences on Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, however, the author does not reinforce these images but actively tries to deconstruct the image of childhood as an idealised state. While his version of childhood is still a defined, separate phase which has a distinct end point, namely puberty, he contrasts childhood innocence with adult maturity and gives preference to knowledge and experience over any inherent purity. The child characters of the series have fully formed personalities and are unique in the sense that they are allowed to grow up into adolescents with all the characteristics of this phase, such as a

burgeoning sexuality (which is almost completely absent from the other works I have analysed).

It is no coincidence that the works of children's literature that I chose to analyse in this paper all belong to the fantasy genre. Fantasy literature has a history of being regarded as appropriate for children while simultaneously not being accepted as a sophisticated genre of challenging literature for adults. This is especially interesting when one considers that the novels I examined have a history of being read by children and adults, with the *Peter Pan* and *Narnia* series primarily consumed by adults today despite being originally conceived as children's fiction, while *His Dark Materials* was always aimed at children, adolescents and adults alike. In order to give an understanding of the relationship between children and fantasy, I gave an overview of the evolution of fantasy literature and the development of its connection to children's literature, as well as a brief outline of the differentiation between fantasy as a whole, as a specific genre among many other (sub)genres often defined by the theme of duality, a conflict between a primary and secondary world.

As there are different theories of fantasy literature, I chose to use the concepts described by Maria Nikolajeva in *The Magic Code* in order to avoid confusions of terminology. Her theory provided a background for my analysis and allowed me to compare the very different worlds of the three authors I studied on a comparable basis, examining the concept of primary and secondary worlds as well as time and passage in relation to the child characters. Moreover, the application of Nikolajeva's concepts of primary and secondary worlds, time and ways of passage allowed a greater understanding of the actual construction of the magical places described in the selected books. The emphasis of this paper was on the depiction of childhood and its transition into adolescence in fantasy literature for children and how the fantasy world and elements in particular are used by the author to represent childhood. I have found that it is above all the journey and the ability to travel between the primary and secondary world that is treated as a symbol of childhood in all the novels that I analysed, with a variety of different ways and meanings. *Peter Pan* does not present nostalgia for lost childhood as much as it is often claimed to do, but childhood as embodied by the character of Peter Pan and the fantasy world of the Neverland symbolise childhood as an era of independence and adventure, albeit one that will have to be left behind in order to take on adult

responsibilities eventually. In fact, the only child in *Peter Pan* that does not grow up, Peter himself, is painted as a somewhat tragic figure, the eternal child that is destined to be forgotten and left behind. The land of Narnia is only accessible to the child characters until they grow too old to visit it, and appears therefore also linked to childhood. Narnia is also a place of adventure, though a different kind than in *Peter Pan*, and a place where children may grow up in name while never quite appearing to reach adolescence. The characters remain essentially the same just as the fantasy land of Narnia does not change significantly, a place of medieval quests and voyages from its creation to its destruction. Pullman's characters all can travel between the worlds of the trilogy's multiverse, but it is no coincidence that the windows between the worlds are sealed just as Lyra and Will reach adolescence, and they begin to prepare for their adult lives. In *Peter Pan* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the secondary world represents a state of independent childhood away from parental guidance where children gain experiences before returning to the primary world, echoing the ending theme of settling into adult responsibilities of *His Dark Materials*. In the *Narnia* series, this is undermined by the last book that strongly emphasises the Christian motif of the novels and chooses to let its characters move on to heaven instead of living out their adult lives, a move that has been regarded as a rejection of growing up by Neil Gaiman, as demonstrated in "The Problem of Susan", as well as by Philip Pullman.

One aspect that all three series of books have in common is the illustration of the power and significance of imagination as a part of childhood, which is regarded as a highly treasured quality that should be valued by children and adults alike. Children's ability to believe is what saves Tinker Bell's life in *Peter Pan* and facilitates the existence of the Neverland; the absence of imagination and faith is lamented in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and storytelling is considered to be Lyra's greatest gift in *His Dark Materials*. The meaning of imagination appears to be a shared quality of children's and fantasy literature and is celebrated by these three writers with dissimilar values in different eras as one of the fundamentals of writing fantastical literature for children.

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9. Appendix

Abstract (English)

This thesis aims to examine the link between fantasy and children, with a particular emphasis on the depiction of the secondary world in fantasy literature and the connection between this fictional world and the concept of childhood.

In the first part of the thesis, the topic of children's literature is analysed and discussed in terms of definition, historical development and idealisation of childhood as illustrated by the characteristics of the Romantic child. The Romantic child is a concept that is strongly influenced by the philosophical writings of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose at the time revolutionary new notions of children and childhood played an important part in the evolution of the perception of childhood as a separate, valuable stage of life. This resulted in the idea of children as inherently innocent and pure characters and childhood as a state of independence and adventure that was also demonstrated in literary texts.

The second theoretical part is concerned with fantasy literature, its origins, definition as a genre and especially its connection to children's literature, as there is a general assumption that fantasy literature is innately more suitable for children than adults, with diverging opinions on the subject depending on the author or literary critic. Moreover, Maria Nikolajeva's terminology regarding secondary worlds in fantasy literature is discussed, which serves as a theoretical backdrop for the analytical part of the paper.

The literary works discussed in this thesis are J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, as well as Neil Gaiman's "The Problem of Susan", which is considered in relation to Lewis' novels. All these texts (with the exception of Gaiman's short story) are regarded as fantasy literature for children and each book demonstrates its own unique approach to representing childhood and its child characters. The focus of the analysis of these texts is on finding traces of Romanticism and an idealisation of childhood, be it in actual emphasis on the traits associated with this concept, or as a subversion or deconstruction of the image. The study also examines the depiction of the secondary, magical world in

these texts and investigates how the world is connected to the idea of childhood, adolescence and growing up.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es, die Verbindung zwischen Fantasy und Kindern zu untersuchen, mit besonderem Schwerpunkt auf Darstellung der zweiten Welt in Fantasyliteratur, sowie die Beziehung zwischen dieser fiktionalen Welt und dem Konzept der Kindheit.

Der erste Teil der Arbeit behandelt das Thema der Kinderliteratur, die in Hinblick auf ihre Definition, historische Entwicklung und Idealisierung von Kindheit, den Eigenschaften des Romantischen Kindheitsbilds entsprechend, analysiert und diskutiert wird. Das Romantische Kind ist ein Konzept, das seine Vorläufer in den Schriften von John Locke und Jean Jacques Rousseau findet, deren für damalige Verhältnisse revolutionäre neue Vorstellungen von Kindern und Kindheit eine große Rolle in der Entwicklung der Betrachtungsweise von Kindheit, als eigenständige, wertvolle Phase des Lebens spielten. Dies hatte zur Folge, dass eine Auffassung von Kindern als grundsätzlich unschuldigen und reinen Wesen und von Kindheit als einer Phase der Unabhängigkeit und des Abenteuers entstand, die sich auch in literarischen Darstellungen niederschlug.

Der zweite theoretische Teil beschäftigt sich mit Fantasyliteratur, insbesondere ihrer Herkunft, Definition als Genre und speziell mit ihrer Beziehung zu Kinderliteratur, da eine allgemeine Annahme existiert, dass Fantasyliteratur für Kinder geeigneter ist als für Erwachsene, obgleich verschiedene Autoren und Kritiker unterschiedliche Meinungen zu diesem Thema vertreten. Weiters wird Maria Nikolajevas Terminologie zu sekundären Welten in Fantasyliteratur erörtert, die die theoretische Grundlage für den Analyseteil der Arbeit darstellt.

Die literarischen Werke, die im Rahmen dieser Diplomarbeit bearbeitet werden, sind *Peter Pan* von J. M. Barrie, *The Chronicles of Narnia* von C. S. Lewis und *His Dark Materials* von Philip Pullman, ebenso wie die Erzählung „The Problem of Susan“ von Neil Gaiman, die mit den Büchern von Lewis in Verbindung gebracht wird. All diese

Texte, mit der Ausnahme von Gaimans Kurzgeschichte, werden als Teil der Fantasyliteratur für Kinder angesehen und jedes der Bücher präsentiert eine eigene Einstellung wenn es um die Repräsentation von Kindheit und der Charaktere im Kindesalter geht. Der Schwerpunkt bei der Analyse dieser Texte liegt darauf, den Einfluss des Romantischen Kindheitsideals in der ausgewählten Literatur nachzuweisen, sei es durch die tatsächliche Hervorhebung der kindlichen Eigenschaften, die mit diesem Konzept in Verbindung gebracht werden, oder die Subversion oder Dekonstruktion dieser Darstellung. Im Rahmen dieser Diplomarbeit wird außerdem die Vorstellung einer sekundären, magischen Welt in diesen Texten untersucht und analysiert, wie diese Welt mit dem vorherrschenden Bild von Kindheit, Jugend und dem Thema des Erwachsenwerdens verbunden ist.

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