

When Worlds Collide: Heterotopias in Fantasy Fiction for Young Adult Readers in France  
and Britain

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## ABSTRACT

SARAH K. CANTRELL: When Worlds Collide: Heterotopias in Fantasy Fiction for Young Adults  
in France and Britain

(Under the co-direction of Laurie Langbauer and Dominique Fisher)

My dissertation examines the alternative worlds in recent fantasy fiction for young adults in Britain and France. I compare J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) trilogy to two French fantasy series, Erik L'Homme's *Le Livre des Étoiles* (*The Book of the Stars*) (2001-2003) and Pierre Bottero's *Ewilan* (2003-2007) series. My work contributes to scholarship on French children's literature and reflects some of the ways in which comparative approaches to writing for children and young adults can highlight the differences in literary traditions as new genres, such as the rise of *la fantasy* in France, emerge as acceptable modes of literary production. Via the spatiality theories of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and others, I argue that the alternative worlds in these texts constitute training grounds that prepare protagonists and their readers to develop codes of ethical action. Focusing on fantasy allows me to explore and compare two very different traditions of writing for children and adolescents. While the British "Golden Age" of children's fiction led to works such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *Winnie-the-Pooh* and later to C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, a similar shift towards imaginary, fantasy worlds did not occur in France, where writing for children and young adults was grounded in instructional strategy. I argue that in current fantasy narratives, protagonists model resistant and subversive strategies that readers can also use to oppose abuses of power in their own world. What is at stake in these texts is not the traditional

binary between light and dark or good and evil. Through the mental and moral growth of their protagonist-heroes, fantasy authors are teaching their readers of all ages to think critically about responding to moral injustices and ethical uncertainties in their own world and in their everyday lives. By imagining these impossible worlds, fantasy provides readers of all ages with the mental practice necessary for becoming capable and mature problem-solvers, who are equipped to face the challenges and problems in their own world with bravery and hope.

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## Introduction

Readers of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 1943 classic *Le Petit Prince* will remember the diminutive protagonist's interplanetary travels in search of connection and friendship. During the course of his voyage from his home on asteroid B-612, the prince encounters a variety of adults, all of whom are obsessed with work, profit, power and knowledge. In St.-Exupéry's water-color illustrations, the simple, sparse globes these characters inhabit provide little or no space for the prince. On none does he find a world in need of his help or his presence until he mysteriously appears in a barren desert on planet Earth.

The one-dimensional spheres of St. Exupéry's king, businessman, lamplighter, and geographer are far removed from those in current post-modern fantasies for children and young adult readers. In the past ten years, the explosion of interest in fantasy literature in Britain and France has heralded a return to the idea of parallel universes and multiple worlds that St. Exupéry's prince explored over 60 years ago. Authors in both countries have constructed richly detailed, complex world spaces subject to alternative laws of physics, logic and magic. The geographically and culturally diverse worlds in the fictions of J.K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, Erik L'Homme and Pierre Bottero all exceed and surpass the alternate worlds of their predecessors such as Lewis Carroll, E.A. Abbott, James Barrie, George MacDonald

and C.S. Lewis in Britain or St.-Exupéry, Henri Bosco, André Maurois and André d'Hôtel in France.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite the world-wide popularity of Rowling and Pullman, and the attention L'Homme and Bottero have received in France, French literature for children and young adults is rarely a subject of scholarly study in the United States and Britain. Penny Brown, one of the few Anglophone scholars working to bring French juvenile literature to English-speaking audiences, writes that “[s]tudies of aspects of French children’s books by Anglophone critics tend to be few in number, and ... tend not to explore the specificities of a young adult readership” (8).<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Brown’s *A Critical History of French Children’s Literature* (1998), Claire-Lise Malarte-Feldman’s special issue of *The Lion and The Unicorn* (1998), consecrated to French children’s literature, and Sandra Beckett’s work on literature for dual audiences in *Transcending Boundaries* (1999), it is rare to find scholarship on French young adult fantasy written for English-speaking audiences.

At the same time that fantastic, fictional world spaces proliferate in books for children and young adults, the work of Claudine Jacquenaud, Wolfgang Iser, Thomas Pavel, and Umberto Eco, in semiotics, fictionality and model theory questions how we conceptualize the representation of the worlds that those texts contain. A generation ago, the work of Fredric Jameson, Pierre Bourdieu, Marc Soriano, and the rise of cultural studies contributed to shifts in the canonical literary field, while the gradual acceptance of mass-market genres (such as rap, the *bande-dessinée* and the graphic novel) in academia has broadened the spaces

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<sup>1</sup> This list is not meant to be exclusive or exhaustive. The authors here are meant to reflect the names that are frequently mentioned in scholarship and criticism featuring 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century British and French literature for children and young adults.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of focus, Brown’s work is limited to continental French writers as is my own study. This choice is not meant as a deliberate exclusion of Francophone authors. The role of the child informs a large part of colonial and post-colonial Francophone literatures, particularly in *mémoire* and autobiography.



available to scholars seeking to explore texts previously deemed too “popular” for rigorous academic study.

Concurrently, the crisis in post-postmodern critical inquiry has led to serious questions concerning the current status of theory and the future of literature. French academic historian and psychoanalytic scholar Elisabeth Roudinesco explains that rather than producing new theories or innovative practices, 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholars are trapped in paralytic stasis. “All we are entitled to do, it would seem,” writes Roudinesco, “is to take stock and draw up assessments, as though the distance that every intellectual enterprise requires amounted to no more than a vast ledger full of entries for things and people ...” (ix). Roudinesco’s *Philosophy in Turbulent Times* (2008) asserts the continued importance and relevance of major French theorists of the 1960s and 1970s such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, for understanding power relations and cultural shifts.<sup>3</sup> Still other academicians question what they see as an over-reliance on theory. In their anthology *Theory’s Empire* (2005), Daphne Patai and Will H. Corral call for a critical re-evaluation of Theory writ large. Patai and Corral argue that “the impasse in which theory finds itself” (1) is founded upon an institutional failure “to question today’s theoretical orthodoxies and to replace them with open discussion and logical argumentation” (7). Admittedly, such a debate has far more proponents than could ever be listed here. Yet this conflict over how to move forward is indicative of the critical impasse at which scholars continue to find themselves.

Moreover, thinking spatially about literature involves the recognition that, like the study of literature and theory noted above, the fields of space theory and spatiality have also

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<sup>3</sup> It is also important to note, however, that none of these theorists has been accepted without debate. Foucault has been debated within feminist and queer theory circles while Deleuze’s concept of deterritorialization has been questioned and complicated by scholars in the field of Francophone Studies.

undergone seismic shifts away from the idea of space as a Euclidean, three-dimensional concept in an “absolute” or “neutral” or “fixed” sense (Hubbard 13). For theorists (Fredric Jameson, Pierre Bourdieu) sociologists (David Sibley, Gill Valentine), geographers (Yi Fu Tuan) and critics of all stripes (among them phenomenologists Georg Simmel, Gaston Bachelard, and Henri Lefebvre, poststructuralists Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze, and social scientists such as Michel de Certeau) space no longer adheres to a stable definition. Rather, space is increasingly theorized as “relational” (Hubbard 14) or relative to the cultures of those who inhabit it and to issues of class, power, and control within those cultures.

This dissertation explores the current fascination with multiple, alternate spaces and universes in British and French fantasy fiction for young adult readers. I compare two recent French fantasy series, Erik L’Homme’s *Le Livre des Étoiles* (2001-2003) and Pierre Bottero’s two three-volume series, *La Quête d’Ewilan* and *Les Mondes d’Ewilan* (2003-2007), to two works by British authors, J. K. Rowling’s seven-volume *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) series and Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* (1995-2005) trilogy. L’Homme and Bottero’s respective series have received brief critical attention from Raymond Perrin, Penny Brown and André-François Ruaud, and are frequently mentioned in various French professional and trade journals for educators and librarians, among them *Lecture Jeune*, *Griffon* and *La revue des livres pour enfants*. They remain, however, relatively unknown to readers of fantasy in Great Britain and the United States.

Unlike the work of L’Homme and Bottero, which has received little to no attention outside France, Rowling and Pullman’s texts have received wide, international acclaim in popular culture as well as academia. In France, young adult fantasy is a relatively new genre

adopted from Britain and one that has only gained acceptance as a legitimate field of study in the past ten years.<sup>4</sup> The contemporaneous publication dates for these primary texts also suggest that fantasy for young adult readers has attained a specific cultural foothold in Britain and France, which merits investigation.<sup>5</sup> This investigation opens onto the changing nature of fictional spaces and fictional worlds in order to examine the ways in which those fictional spaces offer both a critique of our present world and a hope for what it could become. My dissertation places these texts in dialogue in order to examine how this comparative study of cross-national, fantasy literatures can inform our understanding of these trends in the multiple, imaginary worlds of young adult fantasy fiction.

Such a claim, however, begs the question: how do we define these “fantasy” worlds? For the purposes of this study, “fantasy” is understood as literary genre in which the narrative occurs in explicitly imaginary supernatural worlds. I focus even more specifically on those fantasies that include multiple possible universes. These multiple parallel world spaces provide the reader and protagonist with the opportunity to understand “reality” as plural rather than singular. Typically, worlds in young adult fantasy literature can be characterized by a number of attributes. These are worlds that exist according to their own physical laws (such as magic), and in which human characters share space with creatures which readers might consider to be exotic or supernatural beings. Characters travel through space (and

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<sup>4</sup> For a history (or non-history) of young adult French fantasy, see André-François Ruaud’s chapter, “France: Les enfants d’Orphée et de Mélusine” in *Panorama illustré de la fantasy et du merveilleux* (Lyon: Moutons Électriques, 2004): 392-407. See also Ruaud’s *Cartographie du merveilleux* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), Jacques Baudou’s *La Fantasy: Que sais-je?* (Paris: PUF, 2005), Jacques Goimard’s *Critique du merveilleux et de la fantasy* (Paris: Agora, 2003) and Léa Sihol and Estelle Valls de Gomis’ collection, *Fantastique, Fantasy, Science-Fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> When asked to select books for an “ideal library,” a group of French adolescents aged 12-19 selected the same works under scrutiny in this study: J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, Erik L’Homme’s *Le Livre des Étoiles*, and the French translation of Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, *A la croisée des mondes* in addition to Bottero’s own numerous publications (“Nous sommes éveillés!” 16).

often time) with the aid of talismans, fantastic objects or extraordinary talents. Their travels through these spaces frequently conform to the hero's identity quest (Manfrédo 86).

Protagonists also receive companionship and counsel from non-human, marvelous beings and elder humans who serve as mentors or guides. The reader accepts the existence of impossible fictional worlds (Eco 77) and the characters in them for the duration of the narrative.<sup>6</sup> Insofar as these alternative worlds are explicit about their non-real representations, they potentially allow readers to escape daily realities. Yet because these worlds are dystopic and no less threatened than the reader's own, they also critique the abuses at work in the reader's world.

Theories of fictional worlds, the fantastic and fantasy abound in scholarship. Raymond Perrin defines fantasy as a genre which “fait apparaître un monde différent du nôtre, dit ‘monde secondaire’ ... où intervient la magie devenue objet possible de connaissance et dont l’existence est consensuellement admise par les personnages de la fiction” (240).<sup>7</sup> Because it is specifically related to fictional universes in literature for young adult readers, Perrin's definition is a useful one for qualifying the fantastic worlds in the primary texts of this dissertation. All of the narratives take place in multiple worlds that are markedly different from the reader's world. Additionally, all of the series in this study rely on the tacit consensus that “magical” objects or supernatural powers which defy the laws of logic and science in the reader's world are necessary or normal.

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<sup>6</sup> The above paragraph offers a brief outline use of the traditional topoi in fantasy fiction for children and young adults. For a more complete discussion of these features, see Karen Patricia Smith's “Tradition, Transformation and Bold Emergence: Fantastic Legacy and Pullman's *His Dark Materials*” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman's Trilogy* Ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005) 133-151.

<sup>7</sup> Translation: Fantasy “makes a world appear that is different from our own, called a ‘secondary world’ ... into which magic intervenes as a possible source of knowledge and whose existence is consensually admitted by the characters in the fiction proper.”

It is also important to point out that Perrin's reference to "secondary worlds" is not meant to suggest the inferiority of the multiple fictional worlds in young adult fantasy, although one of the criticisms leveled at fantasy is the genre's "escapist" tendencies. Rather, the term, "secondary" is a means of qualifying the fictional world as one related to our own, but with significant fantastic differences whose existence is only possible in a work of fiction. The term, "secondary world" has been a part of fantasy criticism since 1947, when British author J. R. R. Tolkien coined the term in his essay, "On Fairy Stories." For Tolkien and the fantasy scholars and authors who followed him, "secondary worlds" refer to those worlds which the reader accepts as true within the context of the story. Such worlds make no claim to replicate the world of the reader in a mimetic sense. Rather, they tend to exist as utopic, idyllic, or idealized places, which are also usually imperiled or threatened by the presence of evil.<sup>8</sup>

As Greg Bechtel notes in his overview of fantasy theory,<sup>9</sup> Tolkien's approach to fantasy – which Tolkien refers to as "fairy-story" and "Faërie" – has been important to literary scholars such as C. N. Manlove's *Modern Fantasy* (1975), T. E. Little's *The Fantasts* (1984) and Brian Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992). At the same time, Bechtel writes, Tolkien's stance as "embarrassingly conservative, embarrassingly patriarchal, embarrassingly Christian, embarrassingly anti-technology and embarrassingly

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<sup>8</sup> Tolkien describes the fantastic narrative process thus: "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful "sub-creator." He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, he relates what is "true": it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside" (37). Such an elegiac position, however, has effectively precluded Tolkien from inclusion in critical fantasy discourse. See for example Lance Olsen in *The Ellipse of Uncertainty* (1987) in which Olsen categorizes Tolkien's vision as "compensatory, looking back to a lost beautiful and often aristocratic moral and social hierarchy that was communally and teleologically meaningful" (18 and qtd. in Bechtel 145).

<sup>9</sup> Bechtel's article, "'There and Back Again': Progress in the Discourse of Todorovian, Tolkienian and Mystic Fantasy Theory" in *English Studies in Canada* 30.4 (2004): 139-166 contains a masterful summary of fantasy criticism since Tolkien and Tsvetan Todorov. I refer readers looking for a complete and comparative discussion of theorists to his work, which is far too thorough to be reproduced here.

transcendentalist” (146) leads to the exclusion of “On Fairy Stories” from most self-respecting postmodern critical discourses on fantasy. Tolkien’s views of fantasy may be mentioned *en passant* (witness my own relegation of Tolkien to the last sentence of the preceding paragraph), but rarely considered with critical gravitas, or so it seems.

Alternatively, the release of Peter Jackson’s much-acclaimed cinematic adaptation of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) has led to the frequent mention of Tolkien in writing about current British and French fantasy publications. It is not so much Tolkien’s analysis of fantasy that receives emphasis, but how his textual construction, organization and linguistic inventions—the use of the trilogy, para-textual maps, and creation of the runic language of Elfish—continue to serve as models (or in Pullman’s case, points of contention) for fantasy writers. The sheer frequency with which Tolkien is invoked suggests that it is erroneous to dismiss his contributions from the present discussion.

Most studies of young adult fantasy in French and English begin with Tzvetan Todorov, despite the fact that *la fantasy* and *le fantastique* tend to be considered two separate, if somewhat related categories, which I discuss in greater detail below. Todorov’s structuralist analysis in *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970) famously defined the fantastic as “l’hésitation éprouvée par un être qui ne connaît que les lois naturelles face à un événement en apparence surnaturel” (29).<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the fantastic occurs when a “being” or character from a realistic or mimetic fictional universe experiences an event that has all the attributes of a supernatural, illogical, or impossible occurrence. This interruption leads to a moment of profound hesitation or uncertainty on the part of the reader as well, who

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<sup>10</sup> Translation: “the hesitation undergone by one who knows only natural laws and who finds himself confronted with an event that appears to be supernatural.”

questions whether the narrative pertains to the “realistic” or to the “fantastic” mode. Todorov’s schema of the uncanny/fantastic/marvelous theorizes the fantastic as an occurrence with a rational explanation, but which nonetheless produces a moment of narrative ambiguity until the occurrence is resolved. Thus, *le fantastique* is primarily concerned with texts that depict or attempt to establish a fictional representation of the reader’s normal world and the disjunction that occurs when an inexplicable, seemingly supernatural, event troubles and calls into question that representation. Todorov’s theory has been important historically to scholars of children’s fantasy, but as Jack Zipes now notes, “the very nature of the fantastic in literature for all age groups has changed” (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much” 79). Current fantasy, Zipes argues has less to do with the *frisson* produced by the ambiguous or the unnatural. As I also argue, the major concern of fantasy is to offer readers a way towards agency and hope at a time when consumer commodity culture denies both.

As this brief literature review suggests, most, if not all scholarship on fantasy begins with Todorov, which is the reason it is necessary to mention his contributions here. Although Todorov’s view is not central to my approach, his much-cited moment of ambiguity and his problematic division of the “marvelous/fantastic/uncanny” is the historical as well as current *point de départ de rigueur* for French and Anglophone scholars of fantasy criticism for adults. Among them are Eric S. Rabkin’s *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976), Christine Brooke-Rose’s *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* (1981) and Rosemary Jackson’s *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), all of which expand upon Todorov’s initial theories of the fantastic in adult literature. In addition, critical contributions to fantasy scholarship in literature for children and young adults that begin with Todorov include Charlotte Guérette’s

*Au cœur de la littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse* (1998), Maria Nikolajeva's article, "Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern" (2003), and Alison Waller's *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism* (2009). In *Le Roman pour la jeunesse: Approches, Définitions, Techniques Narratives* (1996), Ganna Ottevaere-van Praag's tripartite division of fantasy worlds recalls Todorov's structuralist approach, while focusing specifically on literature produced for young adult readers.

Yet scholars of young adult literature routinely fail to note that Todorov relates the fantastic primarily to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century adult literature, *not* to postmodern fantasy fiction for young adults in the twenty-first-century. Dominated by J. K. Huysmann's *À rebours* (1884), *le fantastique* offered what nineteenth-century readers considered shockingly decadent texts, which hinted at the macabre combination of unlawful and irrational events. Examples from this genre include Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772), Jan Potocki's *Le manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (1797-1815), E.T. A. Hoffman's *La Princesse Brambilla* (1820), and Gérard de Nerval's *Aurélia* (1855). The French literary tradition of the *fantastique* was neither produced, nor intended for, nor adopted by, a young adult audience.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I refer readers interested in recent scholarship on *le fantastique* in French and Francophone literature to Robert Baudry's article, "D'où vient le fantastique ?" in *Iris* 24 (2003) 211-235, which provides many definitions in keeping with nineteenth-century French literature; Christiana Horvath's article, "Le fantastique contemporain : un fantastique au féminin" in *Iris* 24 (2003) 171-180 and Simone Grossman's "Le fantastique contemporain du Québec" in *Iris* 24 (2003): 79-91, both examine *le fantastique* in terms of its adherence to feminist theory and to postmodern deconstruction. For a French view of the fantastic more contemporaneous with Todorov, see Franz Hellens', *Le fantastique réel* (Bruxelles: S.O.D.I, 1967). Unlike the other articles listed here, Hellens' text is less a rigorous academic examination than a personal essay, which makes sweeping essentialist claims both about fantasy ("une façon de voir, de sentir, d'imaginer. On en retrouve des traces dans toutes les littératures du monde et de tous les temps..." [11] /Translation: "a way of seeing, feeling and imagining. One finds traces of it in all the literatures of the world and from all time periods"). Hellens also relies on the stereotypical dichotomy of French sensibility and British imagination ("les Français, sauf exceptions, n'ont ni l'âme ni l'esprit au fantastique...Ce genre ...est dévolu aux hommes du Nord qui savent ne pas raisonner pour vivre" [12-13]/Translation: "the French, with a few exceptions, possess neither the soul nor the spirit of the fantastic...This genre has devolved to the men of the North who know how not to reason in



Despite Todorov's enduring popularity, few current scholars of young adult fantasy who invoke his work point out that the literary and socio-historical context in which Todorov defined *le fantastique* has changed. With the exception of Jack Zipes's recent article in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (2009), it is rare that critics note how Todorov's structuralist approach relied on definite distinctions between fiction and non-fiction as well as a clear-cut division between Todorov's own terminology of the "uncanny" the "fantastic" and the "marvelous." Since 1970, poststructuralist and postmodern theory have critiqued the efficacy of dividing literature by category. Moreover, scholars in many areas of study have demonstrated the ability of all texts – fiction, nonfiction, narrative, poetics, and theory – to subvert and call into question the very categories readers attempt to impose upon them.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the issue of genre, it is also necessary to consider the broader (and perhaps thornier) issue of literature itself. In his essay, "What is Literature Now?" (2007), Jonathan Culler argues that "literature always seeks to outplay itself in acts of reinvention" (237), insofar as literature's own fluidity cannot be contained by a definitive label. The static nature of Todorov's categories of the "marvelous" "fantastic" and "uncanny" do not permit reinvention, fluidity, or play. Alternatively, Culler maintains that "there is not likely to be a single function that all literary works perform..." (229-230). Like other modes of cultural

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order to live"). Note that all of the sources listed here are specifically concerned with *le fantastique* as a genre for adult readers and make no mention of *fantasy* as directed toward an adolescent readership.

<sup>12</sup> This attempt to avoid labels is also true of writers in this study. Philip Pullman insists that *His Dark Materials* is not fantasy, but "stark realism" (Parsons and Nicholson 131). Pierre Bottero also eschews the codes and classifications of what researchers and genre specialists call *la fantasy*. "C'est le travail des spécialistes de classer, décrypter et inventer des codes, pas le mien" (9)./Translation: "It is the work of specialists to classify, decipher, and identify codes, not mine." Benoît Virole the author of *L'enchantement Harry Potter ou la psychologie de l'enfant nouveau*, agrees and writes that "[c]lasser cette oeuvre au sein d'une typologie fixée n'a pas grand sens." Rather, Virole avers the necessity of reading Bottero's texts "en dehors de toute catégorie préétablie..." ("D'un monde à l'autre" 17). /Translation: "Classifying this work within a fixed typology does not mean much" and "outside of all presetablished categories."

production, literature is always engaged in a dual role of reflecting and questioning ideology and cultural constructs of which it is a part. In Culler's view, "the attempt to define a modern concept of literature in opposition to those of earlier times both oversimplifies the range of modern possibilities and neglects powerful, historical affinities" (par14). Literature in its broadest sense elides definition with the result that the boundaries we try to impose upon it prove not enriching, but impoverishing.

Culler's voice joins those of French scholars working to reconfigure the definitions of *littérature*, *le roman* (novel, text) and *le récit* (story, account). In her dialogues with her friend and mentor Jacques Derrida in *For What Tomorrow...?* (2004), Roudinesco defines literature as "a polysemic textuality, subject to a multitude of possible interpretations and readings" (Derrida 126). This issue of multiplicity that defies both uniformity and stable definition reasserts itself in the work of Jean Rouaud and Michel Le Bris in *Pour une littérature-monde* (2007), as well as Régine Robin's *Le roman mémoriel* (1989) and Emmanuelle Pireyre's essay "Fictions Documentaires" (2007).<sup>13</sup> Rouaud, Le Bris, Robin and Pireyre question the legitimacy the French *roman* as a closed form, which has been predetermined by past precedent of other writers. As Derrida himself notes in *The Law of Genre* (1980), "a text would not *belong* to any genre" (230, ital. orig.) insofar as any given text always participates in a multiplicity of genres while at the same time defying the borders that define each. Far from being a set structure, Pireyre describes the French-language *roman* as "vaste et protéiforme, on dit qu'il a chez lui de la place pour tout le monde"

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<sup>13</sup> In the conclusion to his recent *Mondialisation et Littérature de Jeunesse* (2008), Jean Perrot, the foremost French scholar in the field of French children's literature, also cites Le Bris and Rouaud's *Pour une littérature-monde* in his discussion of globalization.

(122).<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Pieyre's "on dit" ("one says") is revealing. It simultaneously suggests the supposedly egalitarian qualities of the *roman* while also contesting the veracity of that claim. If the *roman* really is spacious, if there is indeed "room enough for everyone," the fact that Pieyre must insist upon this space certainly complicates that claim.

While Pieyre's analysis does not address young adult literature or fantasy specifically,<sup>15</sup> I argue that this sense of the *roman* as inclusive rather than exclusive is at the heart of the multi-world fantasy novel. By its willingness to invent new worlds that include the mysterious, the non-human, and the so-called impossible, fantasy engages not only in creating new spaces but in the creation of spaces within spaces where beings such as daemons, talking polar bears, werewolves, giants, centaurs and trolls coexist with the (usually) human protagonists. As all the texts I analyze in the following chapters make clear, such coexistence is not necessarily peaceful or unproblematic, but within the scope of the story, it is *possible*.

Indeed, fantasy's openness to the suspension of traditional rules (such as gravity and inter-world travel) is precisely what makes it so difficult to define. Marcel Brion's contention that fantasy opens onto the largest of possible spaces—"ouvre sur les plus vastes espaces" (qtd. in Hellens 67 and in Jackson 22)—is consonant with Zipes' admission that any attempt to define fantasy as a genre or category "would be to undermine the very nature of

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<sup>14</sup> Translation: "[t]he novel is vast and protean in form. One says that it contains room enough for everyone."

<sup>15</sup> By "documentary fictions," Pieyre is referring to novels in which the focus is not progressive narration, but in which a diversity of real documents are placed in dialogue with each other such that "le principe organisateur allant de la minimale juxtaposition copi  -coll  e au commentaire plus ou moins englobant" (123)./Translation: "the organizing principle going from the minimal juxtaposition of copy-paste to a more or less encompassing commentary."

fantasy” (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much” 80).<sup>16</sup> Finding a place to call one’s own or creating such a place that has never existed before is the work not only of adolescence, but also of the fantasy text itself, which I will discuss in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Like Grassin and Pieyre, Régine Robin notes that current French writers “ne savent plus à l’heure actuelle où se situent les frontières de la littérature” (97).<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, this not-knowing (“ne savent plus”) and uncertainty regarding geographic and literary boundaries allows for a return to narrative and story. Instead of insisting on a single, unified narrative, the concept of story involves multiple, interwoven narratives that exist in dialogue rather than isolation. Robin writes: “Retour de la narration, retour au récit, et recherche de nouvelles formes d’écriture... il me semblent sont appelées à un certain avenir” (97).<sup>18</sup> This return of the narrative and the revalorization of the story coincide with the rise of the fantasy narrative as a now-legitimate area for scholarly discussion.

Robin’s view is echoed by Mathieu Gaborit, author of the young adult fantasy book, *Les Chroniques Crépusculaires*. Gaborit suggests that the historical preference in France for language and style over story has prevented the acceptance of fantasy as a legitimate genre: “on préfère bien souvent une belle langue à une belle histoire et on ne se reconnaît pas dans une littérature de *fantasy* qui privilégie la seconde plutôt que la première...” (196).<sup>19</sup> Gaborit’s emphasis on “histoire” (story, narrative) is also true of Anglophone scholars such as Bechtel, who claims “fantasy asserts the continuing relevance of story in the contemporary

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<sup>16</sup> Zipes cites Theodor Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) and more precisely regarding fantasy’s indefinable qualities, Lucy Armit’s *Theorizing the Fantastic* (1996).

<sup>17</sup> Translation: “no longer know at the current time where the borders of literature are located.”

<sup>18</sup> Translation: “Return of narration, return to the story and research for new forms of writing ... it seems to me are called to a certain future”

<sup>19</sup> Translation: “[In France], one often prefers a beautiful language to a beautiful story, and one does not recognize oneself in fantasy literature that privileges the second rather than the first.”

world, whereby story (in the sense of told narrative) remains a productive reflection of (and on) human consciousness” (164). Similarly, John Clute and Gary Westfahl’s entry for “story” in their *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1999) explains that “20<sup>th</sup> century criticism has not concentrated on Story ... instead tending to devalue genres and individual works in any genre which are deemed to depend too deeply upon ‘primitive’ devices such as storytelling” (900). The return to story in young adult fantasy suggests that story and narrative meet a need among readers that scholarship has too long ignored. Indeed, as early as 1988, Michel Le Bris’ essay in the journal *Roman*, “Manifeste (désabusé) pour une littérature (un peu plus) aventureuse” constituted a militant and polemical call for the end of the marginalization of fiction in literary discourse.<sup>20</sup>

The continuing defense of fantasy by its own proponents exists in tandem with on-going work of scholars in the field of cultural studies to create spaces for the study of popular genre fiction. In France, Marc Soriano’s *Guide de la littérature de jeunesse* (1975) is generally credited with the academic valorization of the study of children’s and young adult literature in France. Catherine Velay-Vallantin explains Soriano’s contribution as no less than “the invention of a scholarly field” (95) in the French academy.<sup>21</sup> Soriano’s critical reappraisal of authors such as Charles Perrault, Madame d’Aulnoy, la Comtesse de Ségur and Jules Verne established the divide between scholarly, academic (or “elitist”) culture and

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<sup>20</sup> Le Bris’ essay is reprinted in *Le grand dehors* (Paris : Payot, 1992), 377-384 in which he declares that “l’aventure est l’essence de la fiction” (377) and defends narrative against “l’onction ecclésiastique à la façon Gallimard (ou de la littérature comme moyen d’accès à une caste), le terrorisme structuraliste des années soixante (le primat du “texte” sur le “récit”), l’hyper-médiatisation d’aujourd’hui...” (379)./ Translation: “adventure is the essence of fiction” and “ecclesiastic unction of Gallimard (or literature as a means of access to a caste), structuralist terrorism of the sixties (the primacy of the “text” over the “story”), and today’s hyper-mediatization...”

<sup>21</sup> For a thorough overview of Soriano’s contributions to the study of French children’s literature, see Catherine Velay-Vallantin’s article, “Reading Marc Soriano or the Invention of a Scholarly Field” in *The Lion and The Unicorn* 22.1 (1998) 92-106.

“popular” (and by extension, “marginal”) culture (Vallentin 96). By focusing on the stories produced for those who remained outside the spheres of sanctioned, “formal” culture, Soriano’s scholarship valorized the academic study of “popular” orally-transmitted genres such as the *comptine*, *devinette*, nursery rhyme, and fairy tale precisely because of the ways in which these genres continue to resist “official” culture.

Soriano’s work parallels the theoretical concerns of scholars like Fredric Jameson and Pierre Bourdieu, whose sociological approaches reinvigorated debates over what constitutes the field of literature studies. In his essay, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” Jameson notes that the barrier that once separated “high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture” (239) no longer exists. As a result, Jameson writes, the postmodern literary field includes “the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced” (239). The disappearance of the distance that formerly separated those possessing “cultural capital” that Pierre Bourdieu called “taste”<sup>22</sup> has opened the study of literature to include genres once thought too plebian to merit academic attention and analysis.

In Bourdieu’s words, shifts in what constitutes a field involve “the ongoing struggle...over who belongs to it and who does not” (38).<sup>23</sup> Like the spaces onto which the young adult fantasy opens, the literary field (insofar as we can ever speak of literature as one,

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<sup>22</sup> See Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979).

<sup>23</sup> In his interview with Loic J.D. Wacquant, Bourdieu explained his use of the term “field” as “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they imposed upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions...Each field presupposes, and generates by its very functioning, the belief in the value of the stake it offers” (39). See Wacquant’s “Towards A Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu” *Sociological Theory* 7.1 (1989): 26-63 and Bourdieu’s chapter, “The intellectual field: a world apart” in *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990): 140-149.

single, unilateral *field*) is also “a space of potential and active forces” (40) within which participants attempt to establish and solidify their own claims to membership. As a result, the space previously consecrated to “high” or “adult” forms of literature has broadened to accommodate and make space for young adults and children as potential audience members. Such widening in the multiple spaces available for readers confirms Derrida’s claim in *For What Tomorrow?* that “[w]herever there is some literature, if there is any, the concept of public space finds itself transformed” (127). As Derrida’s contention of transformation suggests, the space in which we live, in which we publish or “make known” our stories, is in turn altered and rendered different and new by the stories we tell in it.

Like Bourdieu and Derrida, French scholar Jean Perrot also metaphorizes children’s and young adult literature in terms of an “espace littéraire” (66) or literary space. In opposition to spatial ideologies that differentiate a “center” of elite or academic spaces from a “periphery” of popular or amateur writing, Perrot instead re-envision this space of young adult literature as “un ‘champ’ à entrées multiples” (66),<sup>24</sup> a field that allows for multiple points of lateral entry. As a multi-directional “middle space,” young adult fantasy literature allows for the coexistence of disparate and seemingly unrelated elements. Because it privileges the plural over the singular, young adult literature in both France and Britain opens onto the exchange of multiple interpretations but also onto the larger questions of form and genre.

The status of literature as an open question or multi-centered network of increasing complexity has led scholars to note that the boundaries of literature are not fixed or immutable. As early as 1965, Jacques Derrida conceived of the term “différance” as a way of expressing what he later called “a movement of spacing, a ‘becoming-space’ of time, a

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<sup>24</sup> Translation: “a ‘field’ of multiple [points of] entry.”

‘becoming-time’ of space, a reference to alterity, to heterogeneity that is not first a matter of opposition” (21).<sup>25</sup> Like Derrida’s earlier contention that literature changes the public space in which it is received, space also “becomes” in its own right. Space evolves and moves, acting on those within it and deferring assumptions we would assign to those in our midst. Not surprisingly, the multiple world spaces in young adult fantasy also change and shift. The changing nature of these spaces forces the protagonists who travel through them to defer their own desires for the stability of place and home, to confront difference and ambiguity, and to grow in the process.

If Derrida’s theorizing of literature is well-ensconced in academic discourse, scholars in the field of cultural studies have more recently turned their critical attentions to those genres which have traditionally been denied space and legitimacy. The respective research of Janice Radway, Barbara Fuchs and Margaret Doody<sup>26</sup> validates the status of formerly derided “popular” literatures—such as the romance—as appropriate and necessary subjects of academic exploration. Fuchs contends that the romance, the western, science fiction, the spy thriller and fantasy are all “strikingly marginalized in critical discourse...” (128). Despite its academic marginalization, Fuchs argues that so-called “low-brow” or “popular” genres “inform the ‘high’ culture with which they are unthinkingly contrasted” (12). Radway’s work in particular elevates the romance from what Northrop Frye once called its “curiously proletarian status” (23) by calling attention to the ways in which the drug-store romance novel constitutes a “legitimate form of social protest” (222) for its female readers. Radway

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<sup>25</sup> As Roudinesco notes in *For What Tomorrow?*, Derrida’s first definition of *différance* occurred in the essay, “La Parole Soufflée” in the journal *Tel Quel* 20 (1965), and later in *Théorie d’ensemble* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), which appeared in English in Derrida’s *Writing and Difference* (1978) and *Margins of Philosophy* (1982) (20).

<sup>26</sup> See Radway’s *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1991), Fuchs’ *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), and Doody’s *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).



maintains that the romance, whose narrative structure moves toward utopic resolution and social stability, attracts readers seeking more emotional fulfillment and hope than are currently present in their non-reading lives.

Insofar as they allow for comedic resolution to emerge from chaos and conflict, young adult fantasy narratives have traditionally conformed to the romance as Frye defines the genre. Similarly, I argue that the social functions Radway finds in the romance are also true of the young adult fantasy. Young adults also tend to want stories that subvert the status quo by allowing adolescents (not adults) to function as the primary agents of change. As children's author Jane Yolen suggests in *Touch Magic* (1982), reading fantasy involves the suggestion that the reader who puts down the book after the final page is more equipped to act heroically and hopefully than he or she was at the beginning (64). In the fictional fantasy world, the odds of triumph are also slim, but readers of young adult fantasy are empowered by the protests against adult authority and the heroic quests of Rowling's Harry, Pullman's Lyra, L'Homme's Guillemot and Bottero's Camille/Ewilan. For those of us interested in literature's ability to give voice to the disenfranchised in our midst, the study of young adult fantasy can tell us much about readers whose voices are often denied entrée in academic circles and the ways in which literature envisions, criticizes, and seeks to transform the multiple worlds in which we all live.

A final criticism of Todorov's structuralist approach to *le fantastique* as an appropriate point of departure comes from the field of Francophone studies. Todorov's reading of the fantastic presumes a unified or hegemonic French readership, which Francophone scholarship has shown is no longer the case.<sup>27</sup> Le Bris criticizes the paralysis of

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<sup>27</sup> I am aware that the term "Francophone" is a problematic one, given its history as an implicit (and often, explicit) indicator of what many French-speaking writers (among them Edouard Glissant and 2008 Nobel

continental French literature and its systematic refusal to look beyond its own borders. He explains that “la littérature française [est] devenue sourde et aveugle... à force de se croire la seule, l’unique et l’ultime référence à jamais admirable, modèle livré à l’humanité” (25).<sup>28</sup> If Le Bris’ adjectives “deaf” and “blind” are any indication, this self-congratulatory isolation is debilitating. The survival of literature depends on looking outward, especially towards those works that have previously been excluded from accepted, continental discourse.

In Le Bris’ estimation, such paralysis is due in part to the over-insistence on theory that imprisons readers in its own labyrinth. Fredric Jameson reads the prevalence of theory as its own Foucaultian, panoptic, carceral space<sup>29</sup> in which “the theorist wins, therefore, by constructing an increasingly closed and terrifying machine, to that very degree he loses, since the critical capacity of his work is thereby paralyzed” (241). Jameson is in this regard in agreement with Todorov. In his most recent publication, *La littérature en péril* (2006), Todorov himself criticizes what he sees as “une idée absurdement restreinte et appauvrie” (36) of literature. Todorov argues that the privileging of deconstruction and post-modernist approaches to literary theory has alienated the general French reading public. Those who read in order to enlarge their own horizons (“la littérature élargit notre univers, nous incite à imaginer d’autres manières de le concevoir...” [15-16]) are instead faced with the typically deconstructionist text, a work that is “fatalement incohérente” (32), a “représentation de la négation” (34): a text fixated on its absence of meaning which “ne parle que d’elle-même, ou

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Laureate J-M. G. Le Clézio) have viewed as the continued pretensions to cultural superiority of continental France. Although Rouaud and Le Bris suggest the term “une littérature-monde en français” or “a literature-world in French” as a more accurate substitute, I have chosen to use “Francophone” in the interest of brevity.

<sup>28</sup> Translation: “French literature has become deaf and blind ... from believing itself to be the only, unique ultimate and forever admirable reference and the model revealed to the rest of humanity.”

<sup>29</sup> See Michel Foucault’s reading of Jeremy Bentham’s circular prison, the panopticon, in *Surveiller et Punir* (1975).

n'enseigne que le désespoir" (72).<sup>30</sup> As Le Bris points out, Todorov's criticism of French over-emphasis on self-referential theory at the expense of story is not new.<sup>31</sup> In his 1982 essay, "Mort du Signe," Le Bris objected to the inability of French writers and scholars to engage the reading public in enjoyable discovery that strong narrative can provide, suggesting that the acclamation of fantasy is due at least in part to a desire for story that has been lacking.<sup>32</sup>

In his similarly-titled essay, "Mort d'une certaine idée" (2007), Jean Rouaud examines how the so-called 'death' of literature and theory in the wake of the collapse of the post-modern era has led to the demand that French writers on all continents receive recognition. This literature, Rouaud writes, belongs not to one country, but to "[u]n monde ouvert, ...en quête du récit, un monde sachant que sans récit il n'y a pas d'intelligence du monde" (21).<sup>33</sup> Like Robin, Clute, Westfahl, and Bechtel, Rouaud emphasizes the importance of the story or the narrative account as the means by which the reader's world stretches its own boundaries and becomes more open to spaces that world contains.<sup>34</sup>

Given the prominence of Francophone scholarship in the previous pages, it is necessary to state the following caveat: the French portion of this dissertation is specifically

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<sup>30</sup> Translation: "an absurdly restricted and impoverished idea" (32); "literature enlarges our universe and incites us to imagine other ways of conceiving it" (15-16); "fatally incoherent" (32); "representation of negation" (34); "speaks only of itself or only speaks of despair" (72).

<sup>31</sup> The sweeping literary history Todorov sketches in chapters 5 and 6 of *La littérature en péril* is problematically thin. For a critique of Todorov's argument, see Culler's "What is Literature Now?" and Michel Le Bris in "Pour une littérature-monde en français" pp. 29-32.

<sup>32</sup> See Le Bris' essay, "Mort du Signe, retour de la fiction" reprinted in *Le grand dehors* (Paris: Payot, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Translation: "an open world ... in search of a story, a world knowing that without stories there is no intelligence in the world."

<sup>34</sup> The word *récit* can be translated both as the more formal "account" as well as a "story." Rouaud's use of the term differs from that of Gérard Genette in this regard. See Rouaud's association with *récit* with what he calls the fundamental elements of narrative, including plot, the imaginary, and fictional characters: "le récit. l'intrigue, l'imaginaire, les personnages, l'émotion ..." ("Mort d'une certaine idée" 19).

concerned with the work of Erik L'Homme and Pierre Bottero, both of whom are continental French writers. It is my thesis that the “opening” of French publishing to more popular genres like fantasy is due at least in part to writers like Pieyre, Rouaud, Le Bris and Robin. Viewed from this angle, it is possible to interpret both English- and French-language fantasy in light of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of minor literature, or *une littérature mineure*.<sup>35</sup> Fantasy’s history as a sub-genre, suitable only for those seeking Tolkienian escape and consolation, has led to labeling fantasy as “minor” or “other” in relation to more serious forms of literary production.<sup>36</sup> Karen Michelson admits that “[f]antasy does not enjoy the kind of critical attention or prestige that other literary genres ... do” (i) and Denis Labbé concurs, noting the similar reaction to fantasy in France: “[c]onsidérée comme une paralittérature par la critique, la littérature de fantasy ne bénéficie pas non plus d’une grande reconnaissance” (303).<sup>37</sup> In *La fantasy* (2007), Anne Besson notes that French fantasy writers have “une obligation inconsciente dans notre pays de justifier encore et toujours son choix du récit de genre et de grande diffusion” (58).<sup>38</sup> In the case of both French and English-language fantasy, perception has created its own reality. Despite academic valorization of popular literatures by scholars in cultural studies, Deleuze and Guattari’s

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<sup>35</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka : Toward A Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986).

<sup>36</sup> With the exception of animal fables, British philosopher John Locke claimed that fantasy in the form of fairy tales was “perfectly useless trumpery,” and his contemporary, children’s educator Sarah Trimmer, decried fantasy as giving children “confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events” (qtd. in Ang 100). For a larger discussion of the historical critiques leveled against fantasy see chapters one and two of Susan Ang’s *The Widening World of Children’s Literature* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000) and Bechtel’s discussion of the snubbing and defense of fantasy among literary scholars in the opening pages of his article, “‘There and Back Again’ : Progress in the Discourse of Todorovian, Tolkienian and Mystic Fantasy Theory” in *English Studies in Canada* 30.4 (2004): 139-166.

<sup>37</sup> Translation: “Considered as a para-literature by criticism, fantasy literature does not benefit from great recognition.”

<sup>38</sup> Translation: “An unconscious obligation in our country to justify one’s choice of the story as a genre of wide public diffusion.”

vision of minor literature is remarkably close to descriptions of the subversive and frequently revolutionary functions at work in young adult fantasy.

Writers of minor literature, Guattari and Deleuze argue, use their experiences as cultural outsiders to create a literature that subverts dominant literary and ideological discourses. Such literature destabilizes the linguistic and political assumptions of prevailing majority literature. Although Deleuze and Guattari originally understood minority literature as singular, the diversity of post-colonial theory and experience (to which the term *littérature mineure* is frequently applied) suggests that this is not a question of a singular, closed system bundled under the sign of “Other.” Rather, it is necessary to understand minority literatures—like fantastic worlds—as multiple or plural: *des littératures mineures* or minor *literatures*. Deleuze and Guattari write that these literatures allow for “the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility...” (1599). The position of minor literatures on the margins of accepted, prevailing modes of literary discourse gives them the power to “make [language] vibrate with new intensity” (1600). Such intensity is due to the fact that a minor literature uses the same language of the majority, while simultaneously refashioning and deploying that language to reflect minority perspectives and experiences. Minor literatures challenge the literature of the majority, forcing the latter to accept the voices and texts previously relegated to the borders of literary production.

Minor literatures act as what Deleuze and Guattari call “a revolutionary force for all literature” (1601) by deploying language in ways that contest assumptions about what literature can and should do. Scholars in children’s fantasy frequently note the ways in which fantasy questions of the practices and rules that govern the reader’s world as well as

adult assumptions about what literature for the young should be. In *The Widening World of Children's Literature* (2000) Susan Ang describes fantasy as “a mode in which the strictly mimetic influence has been abandoned [and] permits a playfulness which deconstructs the world of stable meanings” (100). Similarly in *The Fantastic Sublime* (1996), David Sandner notes that “the radical otherness of fantasy is experienced as a challenge to one’s construction of reality and a subversion of one’s understanding of the self” (55). As one of the many forms that minor literatures take, fantasy effectively calls into question our definitions of the possible and the impossible. French critic Claudine Jacquenod refers to this question as “l’occasion de réfléchir sur notre monde en nous laissant entrevoir, non pas ce qu’il est, mais ce qu’il pourrait être dans des circonstances différentes” (160).<sup>39</sup> By presenting readers with fundamentally different worlds, creatures, and languages, fantasy transforms the way we see our own. This power suggests that fantasy is what Rosemary Jackson calls “the narrative result of transforming the condition contrary to fact into fact itself” (14). Fantasy operates on the suggestion that the unreal, (l’iréel) may be real (le réel) and invites the reader to consider John Keats’ idea of “negative capability,” which he defined as “being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason...” (92), whereby the “true” and the “stable” are understood fluid, rather than fixed, concepts.<sup>40</sup>

These discussions of the status of genre in general and fantasy in particular raise some important methodological questions. First, how can we still speak of fantasy’s relevance in theoretical terms given the out-dated nature of Todorov and Tolkien’s respective theories?

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<sup>39</sup> Translation: “The opportunity to reflect about our own world by allowing us to see it not as it is but as it could be in different circumstances.”

<sup>40</sup> Pullman’s theoretical physicist Mary Malone quotes British poet John Keats’ definition in *The Subtle Knife*, which I discuss at greater length in chapter three.

Broadly speaking, how do we understand the terms *fiction* and *fantasy* now? Jacquenod's study, "Vers une théorie générale de la fiction" (2005) broadly defines fiction as:

une représentation verbale ou non verbale qu'un auteur produit consciemment dans le but de la transmettre à un destinataire. En transmettant cette représentation, l'auteur de la fiction adopte une attitude spécifique, consistant à inviter le destinataire à imaginer un monde fictif dont les caractéristiques sont compatibles avec celles du monde décrit dans la représentation. (143) <sup>41</sup>

As an "invitation to imagine" (144), fiction is founded on the tacit agreement between the writer and the recipient who agree to pretend that the fictional world evoked in the text does indeed exist. According to Jacquenod, the creation, writing, and reading of fiction involves a game of make-believe or "as-if" ("comme si"): "chaque participant doit faire comme s'il croyait que le monde fictif représenté existait indépendamment de sa représentation" (145).<sup>42</sup> Fictional worlds, Jacquenod argues, operate according to the principle of *transfictionnalité*,<sup>43</sup> whereby any previously established fictional world-structure can be reused and transformed. Jacquenod refers to these previously established fictional worlds as *protomondes*, or proto-worlds, or worlds that are already familiar to the reader because of their previous appearance in other works. In Jacquenod's analysis, the transformation of these proto-worlds into new fictional spaces involves transposition (shifting an original world into a different time period or space while retaining its original narrative or structure); expansion (the extension of the original story to include previous or future events); or displacement (the construction of an

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<sup>41</sup> Translation: "a verbal or non-verbal representation that an author produces consciously with the goal of transmitting it to a recipient. In transmitting this representation, the author of the fiction adopts a specific attitude, which consists of inviting the recipient to imagine a fictional world whose characteristics are compatible with those of the world described in the representation."

<sup>42</sup> Translation: "each participant must act as if the fictional world represented existed independently of its representation."

<sup>43</sup> Jacquenod defines *transfictionnalité* as "les représentations fictionnelles peuvent être reliées entre elles de manière extensionnelle, par la réévocation des personnages, et même des mondes fictifs déjà construits..." (157)./Translation : "fictional representations can be linked among themselves in an extensional manner, by the re-evocation of characters and even previously constructed fictional worlds..."

alternate world, essentially different from the original proto-world that reinvents that world's rules, logic, structure and narrative) (157).

The alternate worlds in this study are most immediately concerned with Jacquenod's theory of displacement, because they all involve the creative invention of multiple fictional worlds. In Jacquenod's analysis, the proto-worlds of fiction and the worlds into which they are displaced, expanded, and transformed offer readers "le plaisir émotionnel" or emotional pleasure of immersing readers in an alternate world while simultaneously protecting them from the implications of its existence (159).

Concurrently, Jacquenod also argues that the relationship between fictional worlds and the reader's world involves a bi-directional trajectory of importation and exploration:

la relation entre les mondes fictifs et notre monde réel est à double sens: d'une part, nous 'importons' dans la fiction ... des croyances que nous avons sur le monde réel et, d'autre part, nous 'exportons' dans notre monde réel des 'principes' suggérés par la fiction (161).<sup>44</sup>

Although Jacquenod is writing for academically-oriented adult audiences, her explanation of the double nature of fictional importation/exportation closely approximates what young adult fantasy fiction readers seek from books. Young adults (as well as readers of any other age group) bring their own concerns, anxieties, and beliefs to the texts of Bottero, Rowling, Pullman and L'Homme. At the same time, these texts always offer readers some knowledge or hard-won piece of wisdom to export to the world beyond the text. That knowledge may come from mentors like L'Homme's Qadehar or Rowling's Albus Dumbledore or from the realizations of the adolescent protagonists themselves, like Pullman's Lyra and Bottero's Ewilan. The articulation of these discoveries is less related to issues of morality or pedagogy

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<sup>44</sup> Translation: "The relationship between fictional worlds and our real world functions in a double-sense. On one hand, we 'import' into fiction beliefs that we have about the real world and on the other hand, we 'export' into our real world the 'principles' suggested by fiction."



than to the emotional truth of the protagonists' journeys in which the reader has participated. As a result, readers learn the same principles of goodness, truth, honor, and hope that the texts' protagonists learn during the course of their travels.

Jacquenod's theory of fictional proto-worlds recalls earlier theories of fictionality advanced by Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco and Thomas Pavel. Iser's *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1993), Pavel's *Fictional Worlds* (1986) and Eco's *The Limits of Interpretation* (1992) all note that all literary worlds are in fact imaginary constructs that require the reader's complicity in what Coleridge famously called the "willing suspension of disbelief" in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817). In an effort to avoid the conventional split between reality and fiction, Iser posits that the fictive functions as an "act" (305) or "mode of consciousness" (xiv) that converts what appears as "reality" into a sign for something beyond itself such that the fictive "disrupts and doubles the referential world" (xv). Concurrently, the fictive also works to alter the imaginary—which Iser specifies as a "featureless and inactive potential" (xvii)—from a diffuse, undefined state into a concrete form. Such a joint transformation, however, can only occur when the text itself becomes a "space for play" (xiv). Like the imaginary spaces in young adult fantasy literature that are themselves spaces for readerly play and in which protagonists such as Rowling's Harry and Pullman's Lyra grow up, space is equally necessary for the fictive to operate on the imaginary.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas Iser's is an anthropological approach to literature, Eco borrows the concept of "possible worlds" from model/set theory in order to clarify how fictional worlds operate as

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<sup>45</sup> Iser's discussion of fantasy builds on Todorov and Jackson's respective theories of the fantastic. Although Iser does discuss what he terms "popular fantasy literature," he does so in the context of Samuel Beckett's *Imagination Dead Imagine*, not literature for young adults. See Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting a Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: John's Hopkins, 1993) 238-246.

cultural constructs. These worlds are “possible states of affaires” (65) or “alternative ways things might have been” (82) that allow for the confrontation between what is fictionally possible yet logically impossible.<sup>46</sup> The power of the imaginary world resides in its suggestive potential. The writer, explains Eco, “sets up impossible worlds that give the illusion of being conceivable” (74). The pleasure of this illusion resides in its as yet undreamt of possibility, which it provokes on the part of the reader who finds in the text a space for necessary mental play.

Like Eco, Pavel also expands upon the “dual universe” that fiction creates. Pavel writes that “[w]orks of fiction more or less dramatically combine incompatible world structures, play with the impossible, and incessantly speak the unspeakable” (62). By virtue of their strangeness, fictional worlds distance the reader from lived experience, in which the impossible and the unspeakable preclude confrontation. Yet when removed to a distant, fictional world, these same threats lose their power to hurt, thereby creating what Pavel calls “symbolic distance.” This distance writes Pavel, “is meant to heal wounds carved with equal strength by unbearable splendor and monstrosity...” (145). The fantastic world structure is other, different, marvelous, and strange precisely because it must be so in order to exercise its transformative function on the reader.<sup>47</sup> Pavel explains that “literary artifacts often are not

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<sup>46</sup> Ruth Ronen notes that the definition of fictional worlds is subject to change depending upon the lens through which such worlds are interpreted. Ronoen writes that “in the philosophical framework, a world is considered as a conceptual construct, in literary theory, worlds are literally understood as constellations of concrete constructs” (24). See her essay, “Are Fictional Worlds Possible?” in *Fiction Updated: Theories of Fiction, Narratology and Poetics* Ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu and Walid Harmarneh (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 21-29.

<sup>47</sup> Pavel’s explanation of “symbolic distance” is echoed in Charlotte Guérette’s *Au cœur de la littérature d’enfance et de jeunesse* (Saint-Foy, Québec: Liberté, 1998) in which she explains the role of the fantasy novel as activating both fear and pleasure in its readers. Such texts, she writes, “favorisent la reconnaissance des peurs en les mettant ou les regardant en scène et permettant de les libérer en mots...La peur, dès qu’elle est exprimée perd sa force torrentielle, son caractère de panique et devient progressivement un jeu” (172). / Translation: “privilege the recognition of fears by putting them in play in the text and liberating [the reader]

projected into fictional distance just to be neutrally beheld but that they vividly bear on the beholder's world" (145). By opening up the space of fictional distance, fantasy worlds revisit a reader's lived experience; the reader, like the fantasy protagonist, returns to his or her non-textual universe as a transformed, wiser, more knowledgeable person.

In addition to the redefinitions of fiction, *le fantastique* and fantasy, it is important to note the French adoption of the Anglicized term, "la fantasy" to refer to works of young adult fiction by French *and* British writers. Besson's *La Fantasy* (2007) suggests that the English spelling "la fantasy" distinguishes it from Todorov's *fantastique* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This alternate label, writes Besson, "ne peut être évité ou remplacé par nul autre: d'abord et tout simplement parce que "fantasy" est le nom que porte un genre ainsi identifiable par son public, ensuite et en outre parce que nous ne disposons pas d'une traduction satisfaisante" (13).<sup>48</sup> Besson argues that the use of *la fantasy* is a pragmatic market and linguistic necessity. To borrow a term from Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism and print culture, "fantasy" constitutes its own "imagined community." Readers on both sides of the Channel recognize the specificities of the fantasy genre, the books and authors who belong to it, and they know that other readers share their interests in the "imagined communities" – such as Rowling's Hogwart's School, Bottero's Gwendalavir, L'Homme's Pays d'Ys, or Pullman's version of Lyra's Oxford—within the stories themselves.<sup>49</sup> In point of fact, these

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from them through the power of words...Once expressed, fear loses its torrential force, ceases to produce panic, and little by little becomes a game."

<sup>48</sup> Translation: "This appellation cannot be avoided or replaced by any other, first and foremost because "fantasy" is the name of a genre so identifiable to its readership and finally because we do not have a satisfactory translation."

<sup>49</sup> For an examination of how these readers construct virtual communities that mirror the imagined ones in fantasy worlds, see Margaret Mackey's "The Survival of Engaged Reading in the Internet Age: New Media, Old Media, and the Book" in *Children's Literature in Education* 32.3 (2001): 167-187 and "Playing in the Phase Space: Contemporary Forms of Fictional Pleasure" in *Signal* 88 (1999): 6-33.

“imagined communities” are quite real. Readers of all four of these series use cyberspace to construct websites, role-playing games, blogs, and fanfictions, through which they share and discuss their responses to these texts.

Besson’s choice of the term, “la fantasy” is seconded by the work of Raymond Perrin, Denis Labbé and Stephan Manfrédo as a way to indicate texts involving any number of alternate, parallel universes, talking creatures, the use of magic, and space or time travel (Manfrédo 84 and Labbé 307). Although Besson and Perrin disagree about the exact moment *la fantasy* debuted as a French term,<sup>50</sup> both agree with Manfrédo and Labbé that attempting to define the category is difficult. Manfrédo explains fantasy as a “[l]ittérature née de l’inventivité, la fantasy explose dans toutes les directions...” (7).<sup>51</sup> Labbé concurs and emphasizes the ways in which French fantasy acts as a *transcultural* rather than national literary genre. Labbé writes that “la *fantasy* française s’est nourrie aux cultures de tous les continents, jouant avec les règles établies par la littérature anglo-saxonne pour mieux la transcender ...” (304).<sup>52</sup> Labbé’s use of the term “anglo-saxonne” is not accidental. French writing on fantasy is repeatedly understood as an adaptation of what French journalist Jacques Baudou terms “ce genre d’essence anglo-saxonne” (“Du côté de Gwendalavir” par. 1).

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<sup>50</sup> Besson associates *la fantasy* with the debut of the Éditions Mnemos in 1995 and the Éditions Nestiveqnen in 1996 (54-58). Perrin dates the term to the publication of Henri Loevenbruck and Alain Nevant’s volume, *Fantasy: Dix-huits récits merveilleux* (Paris: Fleuve Noir, 1998) (248).

<sup>51</sup> Translation: “literature born of inventiveness, fantasy explodes in all directions...”

<sup>52</sup> Translation: “French fantasy has nourished itself on cultures of all continents and plays with the rules established by Anglo-Saxon [fantasy] literature in order to better transcend it...”

French scholars' continued emphasis on fantasy's Anglo-Saxon sensibilities opens onto questions of national and literary identity.<sup>53</sup> French writers repeatedly affirm what they view as their own "essentially Cartesian" literary history vis-à-vis a romanticized British literary tradition characterized by imaginative freedom. In *Bibliothèque de l'entre-mondes* (2005), Françoise Bertelot suggests that, "Les Anglo-Saxonnes, moins cartésiens que nous, ont toujours témoigné d'une grande ouverture à l'imaginaire" (qtd. in Besson 58).<sup>54</sup> Bertelot implies that the traditional French emphasis on rational, Cartesian systems of thought and language has permitted less "ouverture" or "opening" than the British literary tradition. Perrin claims that fantasy remains for French readers, "un pur heritage anglo-saxonne" (246).<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Besson introduces *la fantasy* as belonging to "une *doxa* qui comprend la *fantasy* comme expression d'un imaginaire anglo-américain et oppose en particulier une France de la Raison à une Grande-Bretagne où soufflent les vents d'une sensibilité sans entraves" (46).<sup>56</sup> This repeated emphasis on a French/Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-American schism suggests that French writers imagine their literary communities as different, separate and apart from British and American ones.

Yet, such a dichotomy between French "reason" and British "imagination" is at once misleading and reifies the essentializing cultural stereotypes that studies in comparative and post-national literatures combat. That this distinction occurs so frequently and with such

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<sup>53</sup> For a reading of national identities in Britain and France, see Ala A. Alryyes' work on the ways in which 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>- French and British novels understood the child and the family as a microcosm of the state in Alryyes's *Original Subjects: the Child, the Novel and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Translation: "The English, less Cartesian than we are, have always evinced a great openness towards the imaginary."

<sup>55</sup> Translation: "A purely Anglo-Saxon heritage."

<sup>56</sup> Translation: "A doctrine that understands fantasy as the expression of an Anglo-American imaginary and that particularly opposes a France of Reason to a Great Britain possessing unlimited sensibilities."

apparent naivety in French publications is perhaps indicative of the continuing need to justify fantasy as the subject of scholarship in France. France's long tradition of using children's and young adult literature as a vehicle for inculcating *l'esprit républicain* and the attendant values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, as epitomized by G. Bruno's *La tour de France par deux enfants* (1877) also helps to explain the continued French insistence on cultural difference with Britain. It also implies that British fantasies which allow for the bilateral coexistence of adventure and instruction have served as and continue to be metaphorical "spaces" for French imaginations.

Insisting on this schism, however, ignores the fact that like France, both the United States and Great Britain share a strong didactic tradition in literature for young adult readers. Samuel F. Pickering's *Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children, 1749-1820* (1993) and F. J. Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* (1932) both detail the ways in which literature for children and young adult readers in Britain and the United States follows a tradition of moral didacticism. In Britain and the United States, good books were designed to teach correct behavior and to instill citizenship in their young readers, as Karen Sánchez-Epeler, Catherine Robson, and Angela Sorby all argue.<sup>57</sup> It is also worth noting that Anglophone scholars of young adult fantasy are not engaged in similar comparisons with fantasy by French authors – a discrepancy due to the fact that French fantasy reaches far fewer markets than those of authors like Rowling and Pullman, which have attained world-wide popularity both in translation and in English.

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<sup>57</sup> See Sánchez-Epeler's *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005), Robson's "Standing on the Burning Deck: Poetry, Performance, History" in *PMLA* 120.1 (2005): 148-162, and Sorby's *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and The Place of American Poetry* (Durham, NH: U of New Hampshire Press, 2005).

As Jean Perrot points out, this discrepancy is not limited to markets or to translation alone. Writing in the major French journal for children's literature studies, *La revue des livres pour enfants*, Perrot notes that "[s]urtout la domination de l'anglais dans le domaine éditorial et sur Internet contribue à une uniformisation de l'imaginaire, principalement, pour ce qui concerne la culture d'enfance..." (61).<sup>58</sup> Yet beyond the issue of market dominance, Perrot lists other factors that contribute to what he calls the "disparition de la littérature de jeunesse française dans le monde de la critique universitaire" (67)<sup>59</sup> within France: the lack of systematic research opportunities in the French university system, a deficit in funding from the ministry of National Education to support intellectual inquiry, and the absence of a French-English translation apparatus, given that English is the major language of scholarship, conferences and publication (67). Due to the absence of this type of critical infrastructure, it appears impossible to ascertain whether, given the interest and financial support, French young adult literature could also hold its own with English-speaking readers.<sup>60</sup>

Despite this imbalance in readership in British and French young adult fantasy, scholarship on young adult fantasy that does exist in both countries is equally concerned with

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<sup>58</sup> Translation: "Especially the dominance of English in the editorial domain and on the Internet contributes to the uniformity of the imaginary, principally in that which concerns the culture of childhood..."

<sup>59</sup> Translation: "disappearance of young adult literature in French in the world of international, university critique."

<sup>60</sup> When asked on his website about the possibility of a cinematic version of his *Ewilan* series, Bottero echoes the necessity of English translation explaining, "j' imagine mal un producteur anglais ou américain lire un roman en français.... Il faudrait une traduction en anglais, et si des éditeurs portugais, espagnols, italiens et tchèques ont d'ores et déjà acheté les droits et commencé, voire achevé, la traduction, aucun anglais ne s'est encore présenté" ("Ewilan au cinéma" par 1 ). Translation: "I have a hard time imagining a British or American producer reading a French book.... It would be necessary to have an English translation, and if Portuguese, Italian, Czech editors have already bought the rights and begun, if not already finished, the translation, no single English person has shown interest [in doing so]." It is also an unfortunate fact that English-speaking readers and audiences (especially American ones) do not generally possess French reading ability, making translation a necessity.

issues of categorization,<sup>61</sup> which involves an emphasis on space. Writing in *Le Roman Pour La Jeunesse: Approches, Définitions, Techniques Narratives* (1996), Ganna Ottevaere-van Praag amends Todorov's tripartite schema to describe the principal distinctions between fantasy worlds in young adult literature. Whereas Todorov's taxonomy differentiates between the rational or supernatural *explanations* of seemingly "fantastic" occurrences,<sup>62</sup> Ottevaere-van Praag's division depends on the *spatial location* of action. Fantasy can take place in a single, enchanted universe. Conversely, it can also occur when a marvelous event, power or object makes a sudden appearance in what the reader has previously accepted as mimetically-oriented, "real" world, causing the demarcation between real and unreal to fluctuate (181).<sup>63</sup>

Just as Todorov's *fantastique* bridges the gap between the uncanny and the marvelous, Ottevaere-van Praag situates her third category between the poles of the absolutely fantastic and the disconcerting real. This final category allows for the existence of multiple, parallel universes between which characters may travel with any degree of fluidity (180-181). The primary texts in this project all belong to this category. L'Homme's Guillemot travels between his own medieval, Breton world of Le Pays d'Ys, the dangerous

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<sup>61</sup> Categorization is equally true of writing on English-language children's literature. In her article, "Growing Up: The dilemma of children's literature," Nikolajeva points out that "[t]he conventional way to describe children's literature is to divide it up into "genres" or kinds..." (112). In Nikolajeva's analysis, this division is part of a larger organizational and pedagogical strategy for which books for children are frequently used. Books for adult readers, however, do not depend on this type of categorization: "We do not refer to *Pride and Prejudice* as a domestic novel, to *Crime and Punishment* as a thriller, or to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a time-shift fantasy. They are all just novels" (112).

<sup>62</sup> In Todorov's analysis the uncanny has a rational explanation related to previously known facts accepted as real by the reader or character. In the case of the marvelous occurrence, the phenomenon provoking hesitation is supernatural in nature because it cannot be explained by current scientific laws, and requires future, as yet undiscovered knowledge before it can be considered rational. Todorov situates the fantastic between these two poles as the moment of hesitation in which a seemingly unreal or supernatural event calls into question the reality a reader or character has accepted as "real" for the duration of the narrative.

<sup>63</sup> A brief overview of Ottevaere-Van Praag's schema may also be found in Guérette, pp. 172-173.



Monde Incertain (The Uncertain World) as well as the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of le Monde Certain (The Certain World), a fictional version of present-day France. Bottero's Camille/Ewilan uses her powers of imagination to travel between the worlds of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Paris and her original world, the semi-medieval empire, Gwendalavir in L'Autre Monde (The Other World), and the newly discovered world beyond the island during the course of the cycle. Rowling's Harry Potter travels between the coexisting universes of the Wizarding world and the London of his aunt and uncle Dursley. Pullman's Lyra voyages from her own Oxford to 21<sup>st</sup>-century Oxford, England, and also to the Specter-filled universe of Cittagazze, the suburbs of the dead, and the patoral universe of the *mulefa*.

The result of these multiple worlds, writes Labbé, is that they “annoncent un univers différent du nôtre, un monde qui ne répondra ni à nos référents, ni à nos lois” (307).<sup>64</sup> Nor do readers expect these worlds to correspond to the laws that govern this one. Fantasy worlds must cohere internally and follow their own rules, which may be strikingly similar to the reader's world, but it is the difference, newness, and potential for adventure that readers find so attractive as well as the psychological realism with which authors invest their characters. As Roni Natov points out, children and adolescents respond to these texts because they can identify psychologically and emotionally with the protagonists. Natov cites a fourteen-year-old who asserts that she reads *Harry Potter* “because they are like real life, but more interesting” while a ten-year-old responds, “Harry is like a real boy—except he's a wizard!” (qtd. in Natov 310). In France, fourteen-year-old Antoine Guillemain's book, *Mon*

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<sup>64</sup> Translation: “announce a universe different from our own that will not respond to our referents nor to our laws.”

*Pote, Harry Potter* (2002), collects other French adolescents' similar reactions to the world of the bespectacled boy wizard.<sup>65</sup>

As the definitions of Manfrédo, Labbé, and Ottevaere-Van Praag indicate, fantasy is a fluid and broad category which as Tolkien argued of *faërie*, "cannot be caught in a net of words" (17). It is equally difficult to "catch" their presumed audience in a similar net. In English and French, the terms "juvenile," "adolescent," and "young adult" literature are notoriously difficult to define, in large part due to the proliferation of terms that French and Anglophone publishers use to classify books for non-adult readers. In a general sense, books for children, adolescents and young adults are referred to as "children's literature" in English and as "littérature enfantine" or "littérature d'enfance" in French, whereas the phrase "littérature de jeunesse" is the French term for literature for adolescents. The term "young adult" is itself a Anglicism that does not necessarily have an equivalent category for French readers.<sup>66</sup>

There is also some disagreement among publishers and children's librarians about what age marks the difference between a children's or a young adult text. Waller notes that the American Library Association defines the category, "young adult" as anywhere from 12 to 18 years of age, whereas in Great Britain a "young adult" reader is no older than ages 14 to 16 years old (9). Similarly, in the *Dictionary For Library and Information Science* (2004), Joan Reitz defines a "young adult book" both as one "intended to be read and enjoyed by adolescents 12 to 18 years of age" and also as "a book intended for adults but considered suitable by reviewers and librarians for mature ninth- to twelfth- grade readers" (781).

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<sup>65</sup> The word "pote" is French *argot* (slang) for "buddy" or "friend."

<sup>66</sup> See Christine Ferrand's article, "En littérature, les jeunes adultes existent-ils?" in the special issue of *Lecture Jeune* entitled, *Littérature pour jeunes adultes* 96 (2000) : 11-13.

Alternatively, the French writer Christine Ferrand defines a “jeune adulte” as a high-school student between the ages of 16 and 25 years of age (11). While it is necessary to acknowledge the methodological problem of audience that these terms imply, the focus of this study is the texts themselves, not the age of their readers.<sup>67</sup> Despite these discrepancies, this project employs “young adult” as a broad term that encompasses a wide spectrum of readers. This dissertation uses the terms “juvenile,” “adolescent,” and “young adult” in this sense, but it does not dismiss the idea that any of the texts in question are often enjoyed by younger readers and adults. These texts are directed toward a readership of what Harold Bloom has called “Extremely Intelligent Children of All Ages.”<sup>68</sup>

It is also necessary to recognize that the distinction between “young adult” and “adult” fiction creates confusion. Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy confronts readers with texts equal in narrative and thematic difficulty to those marketed to adults. Pullman’s trilogy requires attention to a complex array of changing characters, plots, and complex religious, mathematical, and theoretical arguments. Likewise, Bottero’s second trilogy, *Les Mondes d’Ewilan* continues the story of Camille/Ewilan with a darker and more problematic subject material of violence and abuse than his first series. Each volume of Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series increases in length and complexity as well. The first three volumes follow the shorter framework of the British boarding school story. By contrast, the latter volumes triple

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<sup>67</sup> I refer readers interested in the problem of audience in literature for children and young adults to Maria Nikolajeva’s scholarly overview in “Growing Up: The dilemma of children’s literature” in *Children’s Literature as Communication* Ed. Roger D. Sell (Philadelphia: John Benjamin’s, 2002) 111-136, Jacqueline Rose’s *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction* (London: MacMillan, 1984), Perry Nodelman’s view of the child as “other” in his article “The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism and Children’s Literature” in *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 17.1 (1992): 29-35, Peter Hollindale’s *Signs of Childness in Children’s Books* (Stroud: Thimble, 1997) and Dana Paramskas’ “Le Fantastique et l’Imaginaire en Français” in *Canadian Children’s Literature/Littérature Canadienne pour la Jeunesse* 15-16 (1980): 80-85.

<sup>68</sup> See Bloom’s collection of *Stories and Poems for Extremely Intelligent Children of All Ages* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

in length and shift in focus to the heroic quest. As Rowling's readers grow and mature with her protagonists, the ethical and emotional decisions they encounter become increasingly complex and difficult to resolve, which suggests that Rowling's writing prepares her readers for the increased demands on their emotional maturity in their own lives.

Such shared narrative, emotional and theoretical complexity indicates how all the primary texts in this dissertation open onto the indefinite "middle space" that is adolescence itself. "Space," writes Waller, "is crucial to the cultural concept of the teenager, even if it is a *lack* of space or disapproval about the use of space that is most significant" (148). Major French publications such as *Le Monde*, *L'Express* and *Le Figaro* have categorized French and British fantasies as a space for evasion and escape. Denis Labbé posits that fantasy "participe au développement d'une liberté de ton et d'espace" (308)<sup>69</sup> insofar as *la fantasy* departs from more established and accepted modes of fiction writing to require greater creativity on the part of reader and author.

These issues of space are also crucial to the authors themselves. Pierre Bottero explains that to build the imaginary universes of Gwedlavir and Valingai, "il faut de l'espace" (*Le Télégramme* par 2).<sup>70</sup> Pullman shares this assertion and believes that "Children's books ... open out on a wideness and amplitude – a moral and mental spaciousness – that adult literary fiction seems to have turned its back on" ("Let's write it in red" 44). The transition from confinement in the protagonist's original world to the space of other worlds is frequently a dangerous move into unknown territory. The young adult reader also needs room to imagine possible worlds, even if their possibility is a fiction. That mental

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<sup>69</sup> Translation: "participates in the development of a liberty of tone and space."

<sup>70</sup> Translation: "one must have space."

space in which to pull, tug, and twist at the construct we have been taught to accept as “reality” is crucial to the young adult’s ability to solve problems and to think critically.

In addition to the necessary space they provide for emotional growth, Jack Zipes and Maria Nikolajeva suggest that these alternate worlds also function as dystopic spaces whose de-formed, dangerous nature implies a direct critique of the reader’s world. For French theorist Michel Butor, these fictional worlds are “inverted” in that they permit criticism of present society. Butor writes that such a world “does not remain side by side with the latter [the reader’s world], but reacts upon it; it suggests that we transform it, that we reinstate what is out of place” (qtd. in Zipes 99). Fantasy works to destabilize conventional ideas about the worlds we inhabit and to propose new ideas and ways of thinking about those worlds and the choices we make within them. By opening up this opposition between escape and social criticism, this project engages with the on-going debate over the literal and literary spaces and places we allow adolescents to inhabit and what those spaces say about the worlds in which we do live. That fantasy literature is now an acceptable space for academic inquiry in France, as demonstrated by the publications of French scholars Jacques Baudou, Anne Besson, Isabelle Nières-Chevrel, and Jean Perrot, suggests fantasy texts have attained a new legitimacy as a space for literary and cultural investigation, as have the spaces contained within those texts.

To the intellectual space outside text and the space within the young adult fantasy text, I add a third space, which is that of adolescence itself. Adolescence is usually defined as the years between childhood and adulthood, extending approximately from age 11 or 12 to the early twenties. Sociologist David Sibley notes that:

Adolescence is an ambiguous zone within which the child/adult boundary can be variously located according to who is doing the categorizing. Thus adolescents are

denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. (qtd. in Valentine, Skelton and Chambers 5)

In Sibley's analysis, adolescence is its own separate psychological, physical and emotional space apart. It is not surprising, then, that literature for young adults and adolescents is deeply involved with the imagined and fictional spaces young adult characters inhabit as well.

The spaces and places which young adults occupy in Western culture has long been a subject of study for developmental psychologists, sociologists, cultural theorists and literary historians. Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) differentiates between *lieu* (place), as a stable locale, from *espace* (space), which is less stable and dependent on the occurrences within it to define its boundaries (117). De Certeau argues that "[stories]... carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces and spaces into places" (118). I submit that this very transformation is at the heart of the multi-world fantasy novel, as protagonists move between fixed and definite "places" through unknown and potentially unstable "spaces." Yet as these characters learn to operate in new worlds, these spaces gradually become familiar "places." Like De Certeau's celebration of the nomadic, Marc Augé's work on the transition from defined "places" to indefinite "spaces" in *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995) suggests that the undefined "non-place" is powerfully attractive precisely because of its unknowable status (118). The spaces of multiple worlds are fascinating because they are undiscovered and unknown to the protagonist as well as the reader.

In addition, Alison Waller notes that the physical and geographic spaces young adults are allowed or forbidden to inhabit (such as street corners, shopping malls, and schools) have received critical attention from sociologists and cultural historians such as Tracy Skelton and

Gill Valentine (148).<sup>71</sup> Given the lack of such physical “places” adults allow young adults to occupy, it is possible that the rise of multiple world structures in young adult fantasy literature is a metaphorical response to the need for space as well as place.

The question of space is equally important for the teenage protagonists in this dissertation. Traveling through space as well as time, young adult protagonists locate themselves outside the physical boundaries of discrete universes. What has previously constituted the protagonists’ sense of place is at once called into question by the new and strange worlds they enter. At the same time, the travels of Rowling’s Harry, L’Homme’s Guillemot, Pullman’s Lyra and Bottero’s Camille/Ewilan require transgression. As in our own world where groups of young adults are forbidden from entering “adult” places, the rules governing travel between worlds in these narratives are also constructed and defined by adults. In fiction as in reality, such worlds are not readily accessible and taboos must be broken or special skills acquired in order to enter them.

In this dissertation, spatiality exists on multiple levels. There is the “space” the text creates—a fictional world existing only in the reader’s mind. There is the realistic “frame” or “place” of origin in which the narrative begins. Such a place may or may not constitute a realistic frame for the reader, given that L’Homme and Pullman’s series both begin in worlds other than this one. Nevertheless, L’Homme’s Pays d’Ys and Pullman’s Oxford do constitute stable “places” of origin that are familiar and well-known to their respective protagonists. All of the narratives discussed here move from these “places” into multiple and conflicting worlds or “spaces” into and between which the protagonists must move. This

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<sup>71</sup> Valentine, Skelton and Chambers point out that “geographies of youth culture” by which they mean the private and public spaces from which youth is excluded or unwanted, such as the shopping mall or the street, “focu[s] largely on young people’s experience of everyday spaces and their sense of spatial oppression” (9).

movement is echoed by the sociological analysis of Luke Desforges, who writes that “[t]ravel is one of the ways in which youth identities ‘stretch out’ beyond the local” (176).<sup>72</sup> The act of “stretching out” beyond the known and the familiar is equally true of the fantasy narrative.

Young adult protagonists’ journeys within these spaces allow them the metaphorical space in which to grow and mature. In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), geographer Yi-Fu Tuan defines such metaphorical space as “mythical” insofar as it is not space of which we possess experiential knowledge, but which nonetheless remains “necessary to our sense of orientation—of being securely in the world” (86). Because it is unknown, mythical space makes those places we do frequent appear with greater clarity. At the same time, our familiarity with the places of our everyday worlds makes mythical space all the more crucial because it “satisfies intellectual and psychological needs; it saves appearances and explains events” (92). Tuan writes that:

[m]ythical space is ... a response of feeling and imagination to fundamental human needs. It differs from pragmatic and scientifically conceived spaces in that it ignores the logic of exclusion and contradiction. Logically, a cosmos can only have one center; in mythical thought it can have many... (99).

Like Tuan’s “mythical spaces” the multi-centered cosmos in young adult fantasy fiction provide for both imagination and contradiction which requires new rules of thinking and acting, as previously fixed or immutable laws of logic or science no longer apply. Although one could critique Tuan’s argument as a romanticized view of space, the continued popularity of young adult fantasy fiction among readers of all ages suggests that this literature is indeed meeting a need for imaginative contradiction that has perhaps been lacking in more realistic approaches to young adult literature.

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<sup>72</sup> Desforges’ article, “Checking Out The Planet” analyzes the world youth travel culture among predominantly white, Western, middle class youth.



These multiple universes or “multiverses” (Besson “À la croisée des mondes” 135)<sup>73</sup> can be theorized in the context of Michel Foucault’s theory of *heterotopias*. Foucault explains the term heterotopias as sites or spaces that “exist out of all places” (24). Heterotopias serve as a theoretical model for understanding the worlds within French and British young adult fantasy as a separate, alternate spaces. Foucault understands heterotopias as real spaces, whose existence is historically documented, geographically locatable, and which exist apart from the places in which everyday life of work, school, leisure, and home occurs. One may choose to enter these “else-where’s” for pleasure (gardens, zoos, cinemas, motel rooms) or be forced to do so (prisons, cemeteries, barracks).

Similarly, the heterotopias of young adult fantasy function on one hand for the reader as enjoyable “else-where’s,” but also require protagonists to enter dystopic spaces within the narrative itself. Fantasy offers its readers a pleasurable release from harsh reality. At the same time, adolescent protagonists within these narratives are forced to enter unforgiving, inverted worlds not to retreat from danger, but to save those worlds from the forces that threaten them. These quests in turn continue to bear powerful witness to the fantasy held by adult and adolescent readers in our own world. It is in part the fantasy that the youngest, smallest and least powerful among us—the Neville Longbottoms and the Luna Lovegoods of the world—can act with extraordinary courage, and in so doing, help save our world from the darkness and despair that threaten it. It is the idea that we can go forward into the real worlds that still exist once we turn the final page and face those worlds with some measure of the bravery we have learned from accompanying Lyra, Guillemot, Harry and Ewilan.

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<sup>73</sup> A “multiverse” is a portemanteau for “multiple universes.” Besson is not the only writer to use this word, which is a current term among scholars of young adult fantasy. Such a term is a useful one for this study in light of the multiplicity of worlds at play in all of my primary sources.

In addition to the parallel worlds that constitute the fictional heterotopias in fantasy texts, the larger heterotopia in question is young adult literature itself. Unlike the literature I am proposing to study, which deals with fantastic universes, Foucault's theory of heterotopias and the space theories of Tuan, de Certeau, and Augé apply to our own world—the one in which I type this essay and in which it is read. Explaining fictional spaces in terms of geographically locatable places is problematic. I submit, however, that children's and young adult literature is already an "other" space, which is already set aside. In bookstores, libraries and academia, children's books are shelved, arranged and stored separately from adult books. As scholars and consumers we must travel to another area, another building, or another room to access these texts.

It is also true that the study of children's, juvenile and young adult literature has not always been a safely established space or field in which to conduct academic research. Historically, young adult and children's literature has been a subject for raised eyebrows, derision, and the pejorative term "kiddie lit."<sup>74</sup> Despite the contributions of cultural studies and the rise of child studies, this literature continues to exist in its own space apart and is not always an easily accepted subject of academic endeavor. It makes sense, then, that this genre which is already "other" also reflects that "otherness" by containing and expanding the equally "other" spaces in which its protagonists travel.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See for example Beverly Lyons Clark's *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003).

<sup>75</sup> The foremost scholar on heterotopias in postmodern juvenile fantasy is Maria Nikolajeva. See her articles, "Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern" in *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy Tale Studies* 17.1 (2003): 138-56; "Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Novels of Diana Wynne Jones" in *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*. Ed. Teya Rosenberg (New York: Peter Lang, 2002): 25-39; and "Exit Children's Literature?" in *The Lion and the Unicorn* 22.1 (1998): 221-236.

In this sense, I am using Foucault's metaphor of the mirror, which is both a utopia, a site "with no real place" (24) and a heterotopia, a site with an absolute, locatable reality, to understand the juvenile or young adult fantasy novel. The mirror, writes Foucault, "makes the place that I occupy at the moment ... at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (24). In the case of these books, the "virtual point" is the page. As a utopia, the book forces the reader to "see [oneself] where [one] is not" (24), since the reader imagines herself (or the narrative's protagonist) as she reads. The book, like the mirror, makes the fictional worlds "at once absolutely real" for the duration of the reading. Yet these worlds are also "absolutely unreal" since there is no denying that in reality, the reader is sitting still looking at marks on a page in a room that (in all likelihood) does not resemble the world depicted in the text. This unreality is also emphasized by the fantastic character of these multiple worlds.

Given this theoretical introduction to fantasy and the real and imaginary spaces that constitute fantastic literary worlds, the question remains: why has the traditionally marginalized genre of young adult fantasy become so widely read and so widely discussed in the past ten years? In the chapters that follow, I argue that British and French young adult fantasy fiction transcends national differences by allowing for escape, subversion and hope for both fictional protagonists as well as real readers. Jack Zipes, the foremost American scholar in children's and young adult fantasy, writes that "the fantastic provides resistance and illuminates a way forward" ("Why Fantasy Matters Too Much" 82). While these functions recur regularly in fantasy, I maintain that it is the combination of an imaginative outlet, together with the thrill of attractive disobedience to convention, and the promise of

change and restoration that makes current fantasies resonate so strongly with 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers. Fantasy does not provide a way out, in the sense of escapist exit, but it does provide a way through.

The issue of subversion is at the heart of Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), and Allison Lurie's *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature* (1990). Like Todorov, Jackson limits her analysis to the works of 19<sup>th</sup>-century adult literature, whereas Lurie's study focuses on literature for children. Yet taken together, their arguments create a useful fusion for understanding the subversive forces at work in the primary texts in this project. Jackson maintains that fantasy "has to do with inverting elements of this world, recombining its constitutive figures in new relations, to produce something strange, unfamiliar, and apparently 'new', absolutely other' and 'different' (8). The fantastic takes on subversive qualities when it deliberately re-orders the world as the reader presumes to know it. Such re-ordering calls into question previous definitions of what constitutes the "true" the "real" and the "known." Lurie argues that the subversive in children's literature operates as a knowing rebellion against the accepted norms of the adult world. The result, writes Lurie, is a literature that "celebrate[s] ... daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups" (x). As a form of wish-fulfillment, children's literature provides a space in which the younger reader can deliberately flaunt the rules without incurring a penalty for overt transgression. In Lurie's analysis, these texts:

suggest that there are other views of human life besides those of the shopping mall and the corporation. They mock current assumptions and express the imaginative, unconventional, noncommercial view of the world in its simplest and purest form. They appeal to the imaginative, questioning, rebellious child within all of us, renew our instinctive energy and act as a source for change. (xi)

Like Tuan's "mythical space," the elegiac nature of Lurie's claims—that children's texts offer us the "simplest and purest" vision of human existence—makes hers a deeply romanticized view of childhood. Alternatively, the espousal of narrative dystopias by young adult writers, such as Robert Cormier, S.E. Hinton, Lois Lowery,<sup>76</sup> and Philip Pullman, demonstrates a conscious refusal to idealize or gloss over the real worlds in which many children and young adults live.

In seeking to dispel misplaced adult nostalgia for childhood as a basis for "energy" "rebellion" and "change," writers for children and young adults have created worlds and spaces that reflect—rather than combat—the sense of postmodern hopelessness and despair. Susan Ang writes that "the child or teenager has to struggle as never before to *be* enough, to maintain self and identity in a world where authority and justice have broken down ... there appears no possibility of triumph." (17). Similarly, Maria Nikolajeva's reading of young adult literature posits a "postlapsarian" ("Growing Up" 127) trend,<sup>77</sup> one which contends "that emancipation is impossible, that the wrong path has been chosen, that the guides were treacherous..." ("Growing Up" 130) and that "existential problems tormenting modern protagonists leave no room for positive answers" (130). In light of the hard and often devastating choices young adult readers face in their daily lives, literature for these readers is disingenuous if it suggests otherwise. Such angst-ridden cynicism reflects a growing awareness of psychological and emotional honesty young adult fiction requires. Although it

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<sup>76</sup> See Cormier's young adult novels *The Chocolate War* (1975), *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985), and *I Am The Cheese* (1977). S.E. Hinton is the author of *The Outsiders* (1967), *Rumblefish* (1975), and *That Was Then, This is Now* (1971). Lois Lowery's novel, *The Giver* (1993) received the Newberry Medal. *The Giver* is now part of a trilogy that includes *A Gathering Blue* (2000) and *Messenger* (2004).

<sup>77</sup> The terms "prelapsarian" and "postlapsarian" mean "before the fall" and "after the fall" respectively. Prelapsarian texts are idyllic or utopic as is the case with A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) or Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908); postlapsarian textual worlds (like those in above footnote) are no longer safe or protected.

is easier to theorize children's and young adult literature as a protected or sheltered "place," that is in some way set apart from the compromises and uncertainties of adulthood, such compartmentalization does not acknowledge many young adults' lived experience in school, at home or in society at large.

The direct avoidance of idyll—which Nikolajeva terms "idyllophobia" (129)—is not limited to critics and scholars, but is openly acknowledged among young adult authors as well. Current young adult authors frequently espouse narrative dystopias as a reflection of the difficult realities their readers confront in their daily lives.<sup>78</sup> Lois Lowery, author of Newberry Award-winning novels *The Giver* (1993) and *Number the Stars* (1989), shares Ang's and Nikolajeva's views. She contends that "[y]oung people handle dystopia every day: in their lives, their dysfunctional families, their violence-ridden schools" (qtd. in Hines and Ostry 199). When similarly asked about the "predatory" nature of child-adult interactions in *His Dark Materials*, Pullman replies that "children who read books don't expect, any longer, the sort of cozy Enid Blyton picture of family life that used to be the only one presented. They know that their own families aren't like that" (Parsons and Nicholson 130). Charlotte Ruffaut, an editor at Hachette Jeunesse, acknowledges "sous l'influence d'Harry Potter, la littérature de fantasie est devenue majeure. Sans doute parce qu'on vit dans un monde qui ne va pas si bien que ça" (qtd. in Brown 261).<sup>79</sup> Writers recognize that for many adolescents, the real world constitutes a far more "perilous realm" than that of any fictional space. Tolkienian escape may provide temporary consolation, but the suggestion

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<sup>78</sup> See Kenneth Kidd's reading of Lowry's *The Giver* in his article, "'A' is for Auschwitz: Psychoanalysis, Trauma Theory, and the 'Children's Literature of Atrocity'" in *Children's Literature* 33 (2005): 120-148.

<sup>79</sup> Translation: "Under the influence of Harry Potter, fantasy literature became major. Without doubt, [that is] because we are living in a world that is not going so well."

remains that even the most fictional spaces must reflect the uncertainty and ambiguity that young adult readers confront in the spaces and places outside the novels they read.

While young adult fantasy is celebrated as a temporary escape, it would be erroneous to ignore its role as explicit social critique. Dystopic multiverses provide the necessary distance for critiquing the limits of conformity and individual freedom, religious and political power. By virtue of their multiplicity, heterotopias imply a postmodern element of uncertainty, which disturbs our expectations of simpler narratives limited to single or double-universe fantasy worlds. Jack Zipes explains that “these kinds of literary works emanate from a critique of ‘postmodern,’ advanced technological societies gone awry – and from a strong impulse for social change” (“Forward” ix).<sup>80</sup> French fantasy author Léa Sihol agrees: “[l]es lecteurs ont besoin de réenchantement, d’évasion, ce qui n’exclut pas la réflexion sur des questions sociales actuelles” (qtd. in Bourdoncle 79).<sup>81</sup> By raising more questions than providing answers, current French and British fantasies deliberately confront readers with an absence of the binary oppositions between good and evil which govern the genres of fairy tale and romance. Instead these fantastic other worlds serve “as a radical mirror to reflect what [is] wrong with the general discourse on manners, mores and norms in society” (Zipes “Inverting and Subverting” 99). Alternate universes exist not in order to make sense of the world but to reflect its ambiguity. The implicit suggestion is that these dystopias are not so far removed from the reader’s world, but that they offer a possible version of what the

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<sup>80</sup> Although the texts examined in this volume tend to be futuristic technocasts rather than alternate universes, Zipes’ remarks are equally true of the multiple universes and worlds that I will study.

<sup>81</sup> Translation: “Readers have need of re-enchantment, which does not exclude reflection on current social questions.”

reader's world could become if the reader does not recognize his or her own society in the deformed fictional world of the narrative.

In addition to its role as a form of social critique, I argue that for French writers and publishers of *littérature de jeunesse*, fantasy offers young adult readers a way out of what has been a largely didactic literary tradition. Penny Brown maintains that “the history of French children's literature has been inseparable for many centuries from a pedagogical agenda” (4) an opinion also supported by Ottevaere-van Praag and Perrot, two major scholars of children's young adult fiction in France. Both agree that the success of fantasy as a literary genre and marketing phenomenon has to do with its marked departure from pedagogy. Ottevaere-van Praag explains, “[l]a finalité pédagogique ne freine plus comme dans les siècles passés le libre épanouissement de la création artistique” (348).<sup>82</sup> Perrot similarly argues that fantasy's attraction resides in its deliberate departure from the moral realism: “il représente pour certains auteurs contemporains un extraordinaire libération de l'imagination, une issue hors d'un réalisme moralisant qui commençait à devenir pesant” (274).<sup>83</sup> Dana Paramskas also notes that one of the reasons imaginative writing and fantasy fiction have not been valorized is “le désir d'imposer une morale reste sous-jacent à la plupart de la littérature de jeunesse....il faut instiller le contrôle du sur-moi ou de la société” (81).<sup>84</sup> If societal constraints work to control and prevent the eruption of the potentially subversive energy, fantasy works to model ways that subversion can be deployed.

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<sup>82</sup> Translation: “Pedagogical finality no longer holds back, as it did in centuries past, the free flowering of artistic creation.”

<sup>83</sup> Translation: “It represents for certain contemporary authors an extraordinary liberation of the imagination, a way out of moralizing realism that was beginning to become weighty.”

<sup>84</sup> Translation: “the desire to impose a moral remains adjacent to most of young adult literature ... it is necessary [for literature] to instill self-control or societal control.”



It is against this tradition of what Paramskas calls “réalisme moralisateur” (81), or moralizing realism, in French children’s and young adult literature that French comparatist Paul Hazard wrote his essay *Les livres, les enfants et les hommes* in 1932. Ventriloquizing the French child who is forced to read fables and explicitly moral tales written to instill proper conduct, Hazard’s implied child equates amusement with boredom and comes to the defeatist and cynical conclusion: “je m’ennuie donc je m’amuse” (15).<sup>85</sup> Instead, Hazard’s child asks adult readers for the opportunity to imagine and dream: “Donnez-nous des ailes, batissez-nous des palais d’azur au milieu de jardins enchantés” (14).<sup>86</sup> Hazard’s pioneering work sought to combat the absence of fantasy and wonder in literature produced for middle- and upper-class French children of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Writing from an historical perspective in *Comparative Children’s Literature* (2005), Emer O’Sullivan asserts that Hazard’s essay was foundational in constituting a “plea for the right of children to appropriate, imaginative, non-didactic books” (6). Hazard’s text is problematic in its reliance on an untenable geographical distinction between Northern and Southern Europe, and its privileging of upper-middle class white European children.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Hazard’s distinction between British “imagination” and French didacticism was equally foundational in instigating similar stereotypes which persist to this day in French authors’ reasons for the relatively “late” arrival of French fantasy. At the same time, Hazard’s essentialist assumptions of a “universal republic of childhood” have proved to have remarkable longevity in the Western culture, where the concept of “childhood” in the upper

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<sup>85</sup> Translation: “I am bored, therefore I am enjoying myself.”

<sup>86</sup> Translation: “Give us wings, build us azure palaces in the middle of enchanted gardens.”

<sup>87</sup> For a thorough comparative critique of Hazard, see the first chapter of O’Sullivan’s *Comparative Children’s Literature*.

and middle classes has been understood as a protected *place* for innocence and play, removed from the ambiguous and compromising *spaces* of the adult world.

As more imaginative and fantastic writing did become part of French children's and juvenile literature, it continued to be linked to instructional strategy. Consider two of the fantasy-oriented French texts published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which didactic or moral lessons remain central elements. Despite the suggestion of creativity, it is impossible to forget that the story is a lesson in disguise. The following stories are all frequently cited in studies of French children's literature as being fantastic, creative, or imaginative. Yet both remain openly pedagogical in their approach to the young readers as well as the young characters.

Claude Roy's *La maison qui s'en vole* (1977) uses the plot device of the magic carpet ride to point out the consequences of inappropriate behavior. Anglophone readers may be familiar with E. Nesbit's four children whose adventures in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) are enjoyable and in which problems are treated with humor rather than alarm. Roy's protagonists, however, experience their ride not as a marvelous treat but as a punishment for taking apart the house furniture. The windows, armoires, rugs, and tables decide that the best way to punish the children for their interest and curiosity is to fly them away on the bedspread. The carpet ride itself is not threatening, except for the chilly clouds and the absence of snacks, which are immediately supplied by a passing flock of storks. The children return home safely having learned appropriate respect for their living arrangements. Despite its whimsical nature, the story's message has less to do with how much fun it might be to fly than with the children's remorse, and it is no mistake that on their safe return home,

the brothers and sisters vow to mind their parents' wishes: they will not dismantle the house furnishings.

Jean Giono's *Le petit garçon qui avait envie de l'espace* (1978), is the story of a little boy who yearns for freedom beyond the walls of trees that surround him, as demonstrated by the "chemins bordées de haies" (1),<sup>88</sup> that block his view of the larger plain. His decision to climb a tree, in hopes of gaining a wider view of the countryside, meets with his father's reminder not to get dirty: "fais attention de ne pas déchirer ta culotte ... ta mère nous tirerait les oreilles" (6).<sup>89</sup> Although the father supports his son's desires for vision and space, his reminder about cleanliness demonstrates the degree to which the boy cannot seek imaginative space without earning parental reprimand.

The child's only freedom comes from a dream vision. In his dream, he is granted an "escalier en colimaçon" (14)—a spiral staircase that not only allows him to climb to the top of the tallest tree in the forest but to see the countryside spread out like a patch-work quilt below him. The experience of sight as far as the eye can see ("à perte de vue" [18]) confirms the child's need for the "l'espace libre" (17)—the free space he tries so desperately to find in reality. That the child's search can only occur in a dream serves as an implicit critique of the absence of such liberty in the child's home. When the child wakes up, his mother's response remains restrictive: "reste tranquille. Tu étais tout découvert" (25).<sup>90</sup> The child however, has learned from his dream and tells the reader that he knows how to do something very important: "je sais désormais faire quelque chose de très important" (27).<sup>91</sup> Rather than

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<sup>88</sup> Translation: "pathways bordered by hedges"

<sup>89</sup> Translation: "Pay attention that you do not mess up your pants...your mother would pull both of our ears."

<sup>90</sup> Translation: "Stay still. You've tossed off all the covers."

<sup>91</sup> Translation: "Now I know how to do something quite important."

directly informing his child readers of what the child has learned, Giono's narrator ends the story with the parenthetical question: "Qu'est-ce que ça peut bien être, cette chose si importante? Je ne sais pas moi!" (27).<sup>92</sup> The rhetorical strategy cues to the child reader to reflect on what the boy learns in the story, since the narrator purports not to know what "this important thing" is. The combination of authorial and parental reminders undermine Giono's effort to support a child's desire for freedom and space.

Indeed, French fantasy appears to be a welcome respite from the tradition of *comme il faut* formality.<sup>93</sup> Children's writer Susie Morgenstern, author of the young adult novel *L'Amerloque*, admits that for French authors "avant [*Harry Potter*] c'était presque honteux et pathétique d'écrire pour les enfants" (qtd. in Festaëts par. 28).<sup>94</sup> As Morganstern's use of the adjectives shameful ("honteux") and pathetic ("pathétique") suggests, writing for children has not always been considered a viable profession, or an appropriate adult intellectual endeavor. Christine Baker, editor of French translations of *Harry Potter* explains the series' success and that of fantasy as due to its permissive, non-pedagogical approach: "Harry Potter a permis d'éviter le risque que la littérature de jeunesse ne serve pas trop à véhiculer des messages" (par. 3).<sup>95</sup> Given the tradition in French children's literature as a "vehicle for messages," fantasy offers readers a departure from overtly didactic stories. L'Homme views his own work as deliberately opposed to scholastic endeavor that characterizes the approach to magic in Rowling's Hogwart's School for Witches and Wizards, where Harry, Hermione

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<sup>92</sup> Translation: "What could it have been, this very important thing? I do not know!"

<sup>93</sup> For an examination of the changing status of fantasy in France, see also Laure Bourdoncle's article, "Le nouveau Graal: Enquête sur le succès de la fantasy" in *Livres Hebdo* 628 (2006):76-79, in which she explores the gradual trend toward acceptance of fantasy in the French academy and publishing market.

<sup>94</sup> Translation: "before [*Harry Potter*] it was almost shameful and pathetic to write for children."

<sup>95</sup> Translation: "Harry Potter permitted young adult literature to avoid the risk of serving too much as a vehicle for messages."

and Ron perfect their magical skills. “Pour moi” L’Homme explains, “il s’agissait de construire une magie qui ne s’apprend pas à l’école” (par. 2).<sup>96</sup> His sorcerer, Qadehar, tutors Guillemot by exploring the flora of Ys. Bottero also follows L’Homme’s model, creating a mentor/apprentice relationship between his heroine Ewilan and the elderly Duom Nil’ Erg, who explains how generations of *dessinateurs* (“designers” or “imagers”) perfect the art of altering reality on the strength of their imaginations that allow them to travel between worlds and create objects out of thin air.

For comparatists, the increasing popularity of fantasy in French juvenile and young adult literature poses an interesting set of theoretical and methodological questions. If, as Brown suggests, imagination in French children’s and young adult literature is undergoing a “renaissance,” (223), what do comparative readings of these texts tell us about the rise in fantasy in the past ten years? My purpose in this project is not to argue the extent of Rowling’s or Pullman’s influence. Nor is it my purpose to study the translation or reception of their work outside Britain. Rather, I examine the ways in which fantasy currently operates in these texts, given that fantasy is a relatively new genre in France, but is a well-established genre in Britain. I argue that the current response to British and French authors of fantasy involves the recognition and need for stories that canonical French “Literature” has not historically addressed. Because these narratives are also engaged in self-reflexive critique of the readers’ worlds, they address a need for social and political change in which they also equip their readers to participate rather than watch from the sidelines.

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<sup>96</sup> Translation: “it was a matter of constructing magic that is not taught in schools.”

Yet to insist on the schisms of escape/danger, imagination/logic, reassurance/critique in British and French approaches to fantasy proves both reductive and simplistic. A story can reassure or comfort its reader at the same time that it challenges that reader to examine the abuses at work in it. I submit that fantasies in this study share equal measures of utopia and dystopia, both of which address the larger question of hope.<sup>97</sup> At the heart of each protagonist's heroic quest is the hope that he or she will overcome the forces of evil that threaten their worlds, and will restore some measure of order and peace.

I argue that what unites these multiple worlds and what makes them worthy of comparative study is the vision of hope they each offer – a hope that fantasy writers in *both* countries see as lacking in other forms of literature. David Sandner posits that “no seeker comes into the forests of Faerie without wanting, without needing to come there. And nobody leaves unchanged” (64-65). In *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), Umberto Eco avers that reading is itself an act of hope. Eco argues that “we will not stop reading fictional stories, because it is in them that we seek a formula to give meaning to our existence. Throughout our lives, after all, we look for a story of our origins, to tell us why we were born and why we have lived” (139). As a hopeful endeavor, reading reminds us that we are not alone. This hope exists side by side with chaos and despair and it is all the more powerful precisely because the protagonists themselves refuse to relinquish it. For example, Pullman's Lyra and Rowling's Harry both lose some of their dearest friends, experience profound doubts, but they continue to believe that their journeys are worth completion. My dissertation explores the ways in which this hope manages to exist despite the seemingly

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<sup>97</sup> See Flo Keyes, who makes a similar argument in *The Literature of Hope in the Middle Ages and Today: Connections in Medieval Romance, Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2006), whose readings rely on the continued validity and importance of Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* as well as the persistence of Carl Jung's theory of archetypes.

insurmountable odds of dystopic worlds, threatened as these worlds are by the evil presence of Rowling's Voldemort, Pullman's Metatron, L'Homme's L'Ombre (the Shadow), and Bottero's Tentacules du Mal (Tentacles of Evil).

In this dissertation, I argue that young adult novels mirror their own heterotopicness by imagining the multiverses in them as such. These heterotopias, or the multiple world spaces, in British and French young adult fantasy provide the reader with the opportunity (at least, in theory) to understand "reality" as multiple, rather than singular. By accepting that more than one world or more than one existence is possible, the reader of heterotopic fantasy engages in the experience of otherness; his or her world is not the only one that exists. Fantasy, argues Labbé, "permet une double évocation: l'initiation et l'altérité. C'est le choc de ces deux motifs qui génèrent l'intrigue et permet au conte de fonctionner" (305).<sup>98</sup> Like the protagonist, the reader must reflect on the necessity of understanding his or her sense of space and place as multiple, varied and diverse. As a result, remarks Guérette, fantasy "incite [le lecteur] à regarder et à voir le monde autrement" (172).<sup>99</sup> As children's author and scholar Jane Yolen notes in *Touch Magic: Fantasy, Faerie and Folklore in the Literature of Childhood* (1981), fantasy encourages complex thinking as well as empathy. Fantasy forces a reader to confront differences, since fantastic characters often speak other languages, have different physical attributes, and often radically different means of existence. In Yolen's analysis, a reader who accepts a centaur, an elf, a dæmon, an Ent, a dwarf, or a hobbit in the world of the story, has less chance of growing up xenophobic (62). Far from confirming

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<sup>98</sup> Translation: "Fantasy permits a double evocation: initiation and alterity. It is the shock of these two motifs that generates the plot and permits the story to function."

<sup>99</sup> Translation: "Fantasy incites the reader to view and to see the world in other ways."

prejudice, reading fantasy forces a young adult to accept the contributions of other, different characters, whatever those differences may be.

This project is not the first to contextualize young adult literature from the theoretical perspective of Foucault's heterotopias. Foucault's theory of "other spaces" influences my reading as do other theories of space cited earlier.<sup>100</sup> Nor is this project the first to deal with alternate worlds or multiple realities in concurrent and simultaneously existing universes.<sup>101</sup> Its uniqueness is in the space it creates for dialogue between texts. Even when French scholars analyze the work of Rowling or Pullman, their writing rarely involves comparisons to fantasies written by French authors.<sup>102</sup> One notable exception to this trend is Raymond Perrin's monumental publication history, *Littérature de jeunesse et presse des jeunes au début du XXIe siècle* (2007). This is a vast compendium, not a literary critique or theoretical analysis.

Moreover, studies of young adult fantasy published in English offer little in terms of theoretical, comparative critique. Marion Lochhead, Pamela Gates, Peter Hunt, and Millicent

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<sup>100</sup> For another reading of Foucault's theory of heterotopias in the context of young adult literature, see Alice Jenkins' article, "Getting to Utopia: Railways and Heterotopia in Children's Literature" in *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 23-37. See also Sara McNamee's article, "Foucault's Heterotopias and Children's Everyday Lives" in *Childhood* 7.4 (2000): 479-492.

<sup>101</sup> See Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London: Continuum) 2001. The website <<http://www.ricochet-jeunes.org>> alone contains twenty-eight citations of critical reviews of fantasy fiction for young adults in its thematic database. The journal *Cahiers Robinson* has dedicated an entire issue to the critical study of "autres mondes" ("other worlds") in international fantasy fiction for young adults. For a critical overview of recent marketing trends in French fantasy for young adults see in particular Guillemette Tison's article, "L'édition pour la jeunesse exploite les 'autres mondes'" in *Cahiers Robinson* 17 (2005): 89-97.

<sup>102</sup> See Pierre Bruno's critical reading of the *Harry Potter* series, "Une victoire du conservatisme et du sexisme? Harry Potter" in *La culture de l'enfance à l'heure de la mondialisation* (Paris: InPress, 2002): 195-212; Isabelle Smadja's psychoanalytic study, *Harry Potter: les raisons d'un succès* (Paris: PUF, 2001) and her article, "L'amour maternel rend les enfants invulnérables" *Le Figaro* 27 Nov. 2003: 4-5; and Anne Besson's semiotic reading of Philip Pullman, "À la croisée des mondes fictionnels: Cycle, littérature de jeunesse et sémiotique des mondes possibles chez Philip Pullman" *Cahiers Robinson* 17 (2005): 125-144.



Lenz have all published volumes on alternative worlds for young adult readers. Yet their texts tend towards plot summary, and celebration of the authors in question. The focus of these secondary works is almost exclusively limited to British novels and it is rare to find any acknowledgement of the contributions of French fantasy authors. Comparatists such as Maria Nikolajeva and Emer O’Sullivan have begun the work of comparative literature for children and young adults, yet French literature remains beyond the scope of their work, an absence protested by scholars in both countries. Reviewing Nikolajeva’s *Children’s Literature Comes of Age* (1996), Jean Perrot protests the absence of French, German and Italian texts: “le choix des œuvres étudiées, choix dans lequel les œuvres contemporaines françaises, italiennes, allemandes, sont totalement ignorées” (62).<sup>103</sup> Similarly, O’Sullivan criticizes Peter Hunt’s *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* (2004), which focuses primarily on publications from English-speaking nations and whose contributors are British, American, Australian and Canadian (O’Sullivan 8). In order to be truly international or transnational, comparative literature for children and young adults must focus its critical energies beyond the English-speaking world, which is the goal of this dissertation. The chapter outlines that follow help to provide a brief overview of the specifics of my analysis.

My first chapter focuses on British author J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. Any critical reading of recent young adult fantasy must acknowledge Rowling’s work as a point of departure, especially since L’Homme and Bottero cite Rowling as the *raison d’être* for their own publications. In my second chapter, I turn specifically to an analysis of Erik L’Homme’s *Le Livre des Étoiles* (*The Book of the Stars*) in an effort to explore Penny

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<sup>103</sup> Translation: “the choice of works studied, [a] choice in which contemporary French, Italian and German works are totally ignored.”

Brown's brief description of the "clear affinity" (261) between L'Homme's work and Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The scope of Brown's two-volume *A Critical History of French Children's Literature* (1998) does not permit her the space for an extensive comparison, but she is not the only scholar to notice the series' thematic and narrative similarities. Manfrédo notes that "les personnages d'apprentis magiciens pullulent, de Guillemot dans *Le Livre des étoiles* d'Erik L'Homme, au célèbre Harry Potter" (85).<sup>104</sup> The French press links L'Homme's work with Rowling's, a comparison L'Homme's own on-going dialogue in the French media has been quick to establish. In an interview in *La-Croix*, L'Homme contends that his trilogy and Rowling's series share "le goût de l'aventure...l'amitié, la loyauté, le courage ...les héros ont des failles mais surmontent leurs faiblesses. Ces valeurs sont intemporels" (par. 4).<sup>105</sup> L'Homme's emphasis on the "timeless" values in both series suggest that these qualities also transcend culture, although I also make the case that L'Homme's treatment of differences among the cultures of his own world spaces is problematic.

Rowling and L'Homme both base their series on the adventures of adolescent male magicians, Harry and Guillemot, who together with their friends, must use their magical training to save multiple worlds from the forces of darkness. Both groups of adolescents are portrayed with the psychological realism of banter, rivalry and pubescent love. Both worlds are threatened by absolute evil – Harry confronts dementors, Death Eaters, and Lord Voldemort just as Guillemot's world is imperiled by the rise of the powerful "L'Ombre"

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<sup>104</sup> Translation: "Characters of apprentice magicians swarm from Guillemot in Erik L'Homme's *Book of the Stars* to the celebrity of Harry Potter."

<sup>105</sup> Translation: "the taste for adventure, friendship, loyalty, courage ... the heros have flaws but they overcome their weaknesses. These values are timeless."

(“The Shadow”). These alternate worlds, however, are differently understood by the characters as well as by the reader. In Rowling’s work, the heterotopia is a world within a world. The Wizarding world exists within modern-day Great Britain, but remains invisible and unknown to everyday humans, or “Muggles,” who do not possess magical talents. The permeable barrier that separates the “real” world from that of Kings Cross 9 ¾ can only be traversed by wizards. Within the Wizarding world itself, travel through space and time are also possible via magical spells, the pensieve, and the flu network.

In Guillemot’s world, *Le Monde Incertain* (The Uncertain World) exists as a discrete island outside of the equally fantastic and somewhat medieval world of *Le Pays d’Ys* (The Realm of Ys) from which the characters originate. These worlds can only be accessed through a magical set of doors, “*Les Portes des Deux Mondes*” or “Doors of Two Worlds” connecting Ys both to the Uncertain World and to the *Monde Certain* (the Certain World) of twenty-first century France. Moving through these spaces reveals the boys’ disobedient, subversive streak: told not to cross into dangerous spaces, that is precisely what they do, confirming Labbé’s argument that “*le désir de passer outre les tabous est tentateur*” (305) and as such fantasy is “*un genre de transgressions*” (308).<sup>106</sup> Like their readers, Harry and Guillemot are not content to stay out of the fray; both boys develop an ethic of disobedience involving the search for a middle way, rather than the one dictated to them by the adults around them.

This same subversive disregard is evident in the gifted adolescent females in Pullman’s *Lyra* and Bottero’s *Camille/Ewilan*. In my third chapter, I focus on Pullman’s use of difference, disorder and dystopia in the multiple worlds through which *Lyra* and *Will*

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<sup>106</sup> Translation: “The desire to pass beyond tabous is tempting .... Fantasy is a genre of transgression.”

travel. Like Rowling's series, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy has received considerable attention from literary, religious and scientific scholars. Scholars have tackled Pullman's reconstruction of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, his references to the poetry of William Blake and William Wordsworth, his use of quantum physics and dark matter, and his fictionalization of Heinrich von Kleist's essay, "On Marionette Theater." Pullman's denunciation of organized religion and his open dislike of C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* have both already been the subject of major scholarly investigations.<sup>107</sup> This section of my dissertation specifically examines the parallel universes Pullman creates and how the experience of each of those universes critiques and calls into question the abuses which are at work in our own.

My fourth and final chapter develops a comparison between Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and Pierre Bottero's *La Quête d'Ewilan* and *Les Mondes d'Ewilan* trilogies. The protagonists of both series, Lyra and Ewilan, share a talent for accessing privileged, trance-like mental spaces. Ewilan's gift of Imagination permits her to travel between worlds that are inaccessible to others, while Lyra's talent for reading the alethiometer grants her access to truths she could not otherwise know. Both girls are estranged from their parents; their travels through multiple world spaces occur with companionship from a male equal with special abilities (Ewilan's friend Salim and Lyra's friend Will). Whereas both girls' original

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<sup>107</sup> Books on Pullman's trilogy proliferate. See for example Milicent Lenz and Carole Scott's collection of scholarly essays, *His Dark Materials Illuminated* (Detroit: Wayne State, 2005), Nicholas Tucker's *Darkness Visible: Inside the Worlds of Philip Pullman* (London: Wizard, 2003), Claire Squires' *Philip Pullman: Master Storyteller* (London: Continuum, 2006), Hugh Rayment-Pickard's *The Devil's Account: Philip Pullman and Christianity* (London: Darton, 2004), Donna Freitas Jason E. King's *Killing the Imposter God: Philip Pullman's Spiritual Imagination in His Dark Materials* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), Mary and John R. Gribbins' *The Science of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials* (New York: Knopf, 2005), Tony Watkin's *Dark Matter: Shedding Light on Philip Pullman's trilogy His Dark Materials* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2006), Leonard F. Wheat's *Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials--a Multiple Allegory: Attacking Religious Superstition in the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe and Paradise Lost* (Amherst.: Prometheus, 2008). Many of the above volumes include complete bibliographical listings of secondary work on Pullman and his prolific interviews in the British and American press.

“places” in society are assured, coming as they do from well-to-do homes, their male counterparts are less economically privileged. Most importantly, all of these texts involve travel between multiple universes and concurrently existing heterotopias which require spatial displacement and psychological growth for Lyra, Ewilan, Salim and Will as the spaces around them become more imperiled.

I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the larger cultural implications at work in these heterotopic texts. My readings suggest that all four texts offer young adult readers a welcome respite or escape, but that they also engage their readers and protagonists with ethical and moral complexities that make these narratives such fertile ground for critical investigation. As Foucault’s reading of heterotopias suggests, these fantastic heterotopias do not always offer readers or protagonists clear-cut choices. Rather, the different worlds in which these choices occur require confrontation with ambiguity, in which the laws of science, logic, and space are no longer certain, fixed principles. The Uncertain World in L’Homme’s series is dangerous precisely because of its unknowable qualities. Likewise, Bottero’s island, L’Autre Monde (The Other World) is equally perilous because of its otherness. These “other spaces” also engender moments of ethical ambiguity, where any action can have an infinite number of positive and negative repercussions. The same character can exhibit a mixture of alarming cruelty and delicate kindness. Fantastic objects and talents can be used with the best of intentions and still lead to horrifying consequences. By presenting difference and ambiguity on a cosmological scale, heterotopic fantasy fiction forces juvenile and young adult readers, and the scholars who study this genre to examine the difficult choices such ambiguity engenders. I argue that the combination of ambiguity and social criticism in young adult fantasy in Britain and France is also enacting a necessary

vision of hope. Its presence serves to reassure and to challenge the readers—both young and not-so-young—who seek to enter the worlds contained in its pages.

## Chapter One

**“I solemnly swear I am up to no good”:**

### **Subversive Spaces in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the multiple subversive and resistant spaces in J. K. Rowling’s seven-volume *Harry Potter* series. I argue that Rowling’s narrative follows Ursula LeGuin’s assertion that fantasy is dangerous. Writing in 1973, well before the “Pottermania” phenomenon swept the publishing world, LeGuin remarked that the world of fantasy “is a real wilderness, and those who go there should not feel too safe” (5). Rowling’s narrative provides readers with a series of spaces and places that are at once safe and not safe. If the Dursley household appears parodic in its dystopic depiction of the “respectable” suburbia, it is in fact, a silently subversive place that protects Harry without his knowledge. Conversely, Hogwarts’ seemingly utopian and protective function is consistently undermined by Voldemort’s return. At the same time, Hogwarts trains Harry and his friends to create their own spaces of resistance, like the Room of Requirement and their later campgrounds in the *Deathly Hallows*. It is in spaces like these that Harry and his friends can learn to resist and subvert the evil around them. By complicating space and place outside the usual binary of freedom/confinement, Rowling’s series suggests that both areas depend on the choices and actions we make within them.

## Critical Reactions: The war over the boy-wizard

If Harry and his friends learn to use spaces and to resist school officials, the Ministry of Magic, and ultimately Voldemort, the metaphorical, intellectual space surrounding Rowling's series is equally dangerous territory. Not since Holden Caulfield has a character incited as much contention as Rowling's Harry Potter. The fictional boy wizard has raised the intellectual hackles of cultural and literary arbiters such as Harold Bloom, Jack Zipes, William Safire, and A.S. Byatt. Safire finds the series is "a waste of time" (par 10), while Byatt argues that Rowling's "patchworked derivative motifs" (par 5) may appeal to children, but that the so-called "childish adults" who read the books "don't have the skills to tell ersatz magic from the real thing..." (par 13). Writing in *The New York Times*, Harold Bloom famously answered his own question when he asked, "Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes" (111). Unlike Safire, Byatt and Bloom, who appear to be more concerned with why adult readers are so mesmerized by Rowling's worlds, Zipes focuses on how the *Harry Potter* books promote (rather than undermine) the industrial commodification of childhood and child culture. In Zipes's opinion, the books' popularity is due to their "conventionality, predictability and happy endings...They are easy to read, carefully manicured and packaged, and they sell extraordinarily well precisely because they are so cute and so ordinary" (175).<sup>1</sup> In attempting to explain the popularity of Rowling's series, Zipes, Byatt and Bloom seem more concerned with establishing their own conceptions of what books for children and young adult readers *should* be rather than considering Rowling's text on its own terms, which is the goal of the chapter that follows.

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<sup>1</sup> In France, a similar concern has been raised by Benoît Viriole in his article, "Des héros en pleine mutation?" in *La revue des livres pour enfants* 241 (2008): 137-140 in which he notes, "[I]es héros conçus initialement par les auteurs pour les besoins de leurs œuvres littéraires se retrouvent transformés en objets destinés à la consommation de masse" (138)/ Translation: "the heroes, initially conceived by their authors for the needs of their literary works, find themselves transformed into objects destined for mass consumption."



In spite of such derisive remarks from literary luminaries, others scholars have rushed to the boy wizard's defense. In his editorial response to Byatt on *Salon.com*, writer Charles Taylor suggests that Rowling's series is "just too much fun" for readers to ignore.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in *The Return of the Hero* (2005), Christopher Wrigley responds to Byatt with the riposte that "Rowling possesses, and teaches her readers to acquire a very sharp nose for the ersatz and the trivial..." (14), through the unmasking of characters like the vain author Gilderoy Lockhart and the tabloid journalist Rita Skeeter. For Ximena C. Gallardo and C. Jason Smith, Rowling's narrative is anything but conventional. Rather, they argue that "Rowling's creation actively troubles culturally-defined binaries that divide us all" (92).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Lisa Damour writes that Harry's maturation over the course of the series not only "offers a rich portrait of what non-magical adolescence looks and feels like" (1) but also "confirm[s] for teenage readers that Rowling 'gets it' " (2). Even as the places they inhabit prove fantastic, Rowling's characters also are in the process of negotiating the mental, intellectual and emotional spaces of young adulthood. Young adult readers recognize Rowling's respect for the complexities of the places they inhabit and the interior, mental spaces of adolescence as well.

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<sup>2</sup> Taylor is also quoted in André-François Ruaud's *Panorama illustré de la fantasy et du merveilleux*, which is proof that French readers are also paying attention to the cultural wars Rowling's Harry has instigated for Anglophone readers (1965).

<sup>3</sup> Gallardo and Smith's primary example of a character who defies facile labels is Nymphadora Tonks, the Auror with brightly-dyed hair and a clear affinity for independent rock bands, who represents a more nuanced version of femininity than more traditional figures like Molly Weasley or Minerva McGonagall. These same "culturally-defined binaries" are repeatedly crossed by characters whose multiple identities call into question the very boundaries others impose upon them. Hermione is of Muggle parentage and faces the racial slur, "Mudblood" over the course of the series; Remus Lupin is a kind and compassionate teacher, but whose status as a werewolf prompts Ron Weasley's fearful and xenophobic reaction, "Get away from me werewolf" (*Prisoner* 345; ital. orig.). Even more negative characters display this kind of boundary crossing. Although Harry opposes the Minister of Magic Rufus Scrimgeour's politics in *Half-Blood Prince*, he also learns that Scrimgeour dies to save him (*Hallows* 206). Professor Snape spends the series torturing Harry and his companions in Potions class, but is later revered by Harry as "the bravest man I ever knew" (*Hallows* 758).

These reactions and the popularity of the *Harry Potter* books as crossover, or dual-audience novels suggest that Rowling not only understands the difficulties of adolescence, but that the world outside her texts has become increasingly daunting for readers of all ages.<sup>4</sup> Places and spaces in Harry's two worlds are by definition ambiguous; they have the potential to be safe and terrifying, much like those spaces where we as readers live, work, play and read. For Harry, as for Rowling's readers, living honorably in such worlds requires a kind of courageous magic we have perhaps yet to imagine. As Taylor points out, one of the reasons we turn to Rowling's worlds is because those fictional spaces give us a chance to think through some of the complexities of our own world. As a result, we return to the places and spaces in which we live better prepared for the challenges we will most certainly face (par 5).<sup>5</sup>

As the discussion above suggests, Rowling's *Harry Potter* series entails entry into critically fraught spaces. My purpose here has less to do with *why* children, young adults, or scholars read the *Harry Potter* books than with the ways in which Harry experiences and creates resistant spaces in the course of his seven years at Hogwarts. I argue that these subversive spaces allow him to fight his way towards the adulthood he claims when he challenges Voldemort—the perpetual infant and “childish adult”—to “Be a man” (*Deathly Hallows* 741). In order to arrive at this moment, Harry must straddle two worlds. He learns to resist the Muggle (non-magical) culture that ironically shelters him, but he also comes of age in an increasingly corrupt wizard world, one that vacillates between protecting him and

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<sup>4</sup> For scholarship on crossover or dual-audience writing, see Sandra Beckett's *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults* (New York: Garland, 1999) and her more recent study, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2003) as well as Rachel Falconer's *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Taylor writes that “all great fantasies relate back to the real world; any reassurance they offer always comes at a price” (par. 5).

seeking his death. Despite all the life-threatening situations which Harry, Ron and Hermione face, Harry's quest to survive adolescence and to emerge as a mature and capable young man mirrors the same quest readers face in this world, the space where Rowling's books are read.

In this chapter, I argue that Harry's experience of dystopic place at the Dursleys', the euphoric sense of utopia and belonging that he initially experiences at Hogwarts, and his dismay when that same world ceases to function in *Order of the Phoenix* and *Deathly Hallows*, lead Harry and his friends to construct resistant spaces in which they learn to subvert adult power.<sup>6</sup> In Rowling's series, adolescence provides her protagonists with a resistant space in which to contest adult control. As Roni Natov explains, like the state of adolescence itself, Hogwarts is "a liminal space that tests the mettle of the child hero and, like all liminal landscapes, it represents the "not-as-yet-conscious," what is yet-to-be, possibility itself, and chance" (318). No longer children and not yet adults, Rowling's teenage wizards and witches learn to test their strength against the easy or evasive answers adults provide. More importantly, as Harry and his companions learn to resist evil, their resistant spaces become training grounds for hope and transformation that are only possible when they possess the strength and agency to claim those spaces as their own.

And resist Harry does. Of the four protagonists in this study, Harry is the one who battles most fiercely and actively – whether he is fighting his Uncle Vernon, his school antagonist Draco Malfoy, or his ultimate nemesis, Lord Voldemort. Alternatively, Pullman's Lyra in *His Dark Materials*, L'Homme's Guillemot of *Le Livre des Étoiles*, and Bottero's

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that Rowling's creation of alternate fantasy spaces has drawn attention from other scholars as well. Claudia Fenske includes a brief overview of "Narrative Space" in her study, *Muggles, Monsters and Magicians. A Literary Analysis of the Harry Potter Series* (Frankfort: Peter Lang, 2008). Gareth B. Matthews addresses the metaphysical issues of Rowling's alternate reality in his essay, "Finding Platform 9 ¾ : The Idea of a Different Reality" as does Michael Siberstein in his essay, "Space, Time, and Magic," both of which are included in *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004): 175-199. My project, however, examines the competing roles of space and place over the course of the entire series.

Ewilan in *La Quête d'Ewilan* and *Les Mondes d'Ewilan*, are all accompanied in their quests by warrior figures whose prowess and capacity for outright violence allow each of them to survive their perilous journeys without engaging in physical violence themselves.<sup>7</sup> Although Harry is helped by Hermione, Ron, his headmaster Dumbledore, his godfather Sirius Black, and members of the Order of the Phoenix, he repeatedly finds himself a solitary figure whose battle against Voldemort is his alone. His preparation for this final battle involves the creation of resistant and undefined spaces—spaces like the Room of Requirement, and the multiple hidden campgrounds he, Ron and Hermione use—which serve at once as subversive and pro-active spaces in which Harry teaches his friends to act with courage and to subvert evil that threatens to overwhelm them.

#### **Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging**

For most of Rowling's series, Harry's worlds are neatly divided into two spaces: the Muggle (or mundane) world of everyday Great Britain and the magical, wizarding world that exists both within and outside Muggle boundaries. Although these worlds may briefly intersect, they never truly touch until the dementors invade Privet Drive in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.<sup>8</sup> The Muggle world at Privet drive in Little Whinging is epitomized by the Dursleys' residence, a place where Harry finds himself at the opening of each book. The invasive privet plant in the Dursleys' street address mimics the persistence

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<sup>7</sup> Lyra is protected by the bear king, Iorek Byrnison who battles Iofur in *The Golden Compass*; in *The Subtle Knife* protective roles are assumed by Will Parry the admitted "warrior" (283) and by Lee Scoresby, who sacrifices his life for Lyra in a shoot-out (270). The army that rushes to Guillemot's aid in *Le Visage de L'Ombre (The Face of the Shadow)* is composed of combatants, such as the warrior-queen Kushumaï and her army from the Irtych Violet forest, and the army of knights and chevaliers led by Guillemot's Uncle Urien. In Bottero's *La Quête d'Ewilan* and *Les Mondes d'Ewilan*, Ewilan's companions, Edwin, Bjorn, Ellana and Siam are all trained warriors who engage in bloody and vicious combat while Ewilan herself relies on mental battle via her capacity to project her own mind into the unseen world of the Spheres.

<sup>8</sup> Such intersections occur at places like King's Cross 9 and ¾, the entrance to the Diagon Alley via The Leaky Cauldron, the closed store front that disguises St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies, and the phone booth that leads to the subterranean Ministry of Magic.

with which Harry's Aunt Petunia spies on her neighbors (*Sorcerer's Stone* 1 and *Order* 27). In addition, the Dursleys' town name, "Little Whinging" (the British form of the American *whining* or *complaining*) immediately suggests the pettiness and triviality of a place with which Harry must contend, whether he is dodging his cousin's Dudley's taunts, his Uncle Dursleys' threats, or his Aunt Petunia's imperious orders.

Like their address, Uncle Dursley and Aunt Petunia are equally determined to resist Harry's presence and to deny his place in their home as well as the existence of a parallel wizarding world from which he comes. The Dursleys relegate Harry to a cupboard under the stairs in an effort to transform his presence into an absence. Although he will later use his invisibility cloak to move through space, Harry's initial treatment as unseen marks the Dursleys' inability to interpret the space around them as multiple and plural rather than singular. The Dursleys' refusal to acknowledge Harry's presence confirms Suman Gupta's argument that "the Muggle world, reflected through the microcosm of the Dursley household, is *aware* of the magic but chooses to disregard or shun it" (86; ital. orig.). Because Harry's existence troubles the Dursleys' definition of normalcy and place, the Dursleys repeatedly try to establish their home as a place of correct, suburban behavior where life is as ordered as their son Dudley's television schedule.

Yet even as the Dursleys' sense of place and home is predicated on stillness, much like the Certain World in Erik L'Homme's *Le Livre des Étoiles*,<sup>9</sup> Harry resists confined places to which the Dursleys relegate him. Harry's shrinking sweaters and re-growing hair constantly destabilize the Dursleys' conceptions of size and time (*Sorcerer's* 24). Because Harry knows that the Dursleys "think I am a waste of space" (*Hallows* 40), he uses his presence to resist their efforts to ignore his place in their home, defying his uncle's orders

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of L'Homme's depiction of the reader's world, see chapter two.

and making fun of Dudley's spoiled, brutish behavior. Amanda Cockrell notes that the difference Harry represents to the Dursleys is "disturbing to those who like their world to stay still" (15). The Dursleys are incapable of coping with the chaos that Harry unwittingly brings into their home (exemplified by the arrivals of owls, Hagrid, and Dobby the house-elf), which underscores the rigidity of their lives. By extension, that same rigidity of place illustrates the necessity of flexibility and fluidity, which are only possible when spaces are large enough to allow for freedom, movement and growth.

These opening sections of Rowling's books serve to underscore how Privet Drive is as much a dystopia as it is a parody of place. John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro are correct in noting that the Dursleys' reaction to Harry "reads more like farce than tragedy" (122). Like the dystopias in most fairy tales, the Dursleys' dysfunctional residence is a place that encourages readers' derision rather than fear, in large part because Harry is willing to displace those within it by inflating his Uncle Dursleys' Aunt Marge to balloon-like proportions (*Prisoner* 29-30). Harry threatens his Uncle with the displeasure of Harry's godfather, Sirius Black (*Prisoner* 435; *Goblet* 33), and taunts Dudley with false spells: "*Jiggery pokery!*" said Harry in a fierce voice. "*Hocus pocus—squiggly wiggly—*" (*Chamber* 9). Like Byatt's "ersatz" adults, Dudley is too dumb to tell the difference between false magic and real magic; therein is Rowling's comedy and Harry's glee. Despite the spatial limitations his relatives impose, he can still find ways to resist and mock their normalcy. In a place that is resistant to him, Harry adopts strategies of resistance that will be crucial for his survival in later volumes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Harry's trials at the Dursley residence have sparked numerous remarks from scholars, many of whom follow Byatt in explaining the Dursleys' appeal in terms of Sigmund Freud's "family romance." In his article, "Harry Potter expliqué aux parents," the French psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron explains that "le roman oedipien que tout

By establishing the Dursley home as a place of sheer satire, Rowling pokes fun at the conspicuous consumer culture to which the Dursleys ascribe. The abundance of food and gifts the Dursleys lavish on their son, Dudley, whose obesity mirrors his parents' excess, leads Benoît Virole to remark that this world is that of "le monde sécularisé d'une société marchande devenue imbécile..." (Virole qtd. in Ruaud 390).<sup>11</sup> Virole's claim is born out by the fact that Dudley tells day and time according to his television schedule, suggesting the Dursleys epitomize the very people Byatt has in mind when she describes those "whose imaginative lives are confined to TV" (par. 7). The Dursleys' excesses (of food, money, cleanliness, behavior) and their obsession with their own status simultaneously personify the very behavior mass media promotes and invite readers' sympathy and frustration on Harry's behalf.

Because the narrative is focalized through Harry's limited point of view, readers and Harry do not learn that as dystopic a place as Privet Drive is, it is ironically a sheltered space that hides him from Voldemort and his Death Eaters. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry and the reader learn that upon her death, Lily Potter placed a protective charm on her sister's house, ensuring her son's safety, if not his physical or emotional well-being. In this sense, the Dursley residence problematizes issues of place by creating one in which Harry is at once

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enfant a tendance à se construire de sa propre histoire: ses parents biologiques seraient différents de l'homme et de la femme qui l'ont élevé et, bien entendu, beaucoup plus intelligents, riches et célèbres que ceux-ci" (par 5). /Translation: "the Oedipal fantasy every child has a tendency to construct from his own experience: his or her biological parents must be different from the man and the woman raising him or her and of course, much more intelligent, rich and famous than those others." Amanda Cockrell contends that "[t]o the reader, the Dursleys not only represent every child's dreadful kin...but also the child's own parents when those parents are being "unfair" " (21). See also M. Catherine Grimes' argument that "[f]airy tales and Harry Potter books allow [children] the comfort of detesting one set of parents, the disciplinarians, while remaining loyal to the beloved ones" (91); and Roni Natov's view that Harry's experience at the Dursleys' house "epitomizes what...every child feels—that she is on her own, unacknowledged, unappreciated, unseen, and unheard, up against an unfair parent, and by extension an unfair world" (311). For Freud's original 1909 essay, see *The Uncanny* Ed. David McLintock and Hugh Houghton (New York: Penguin, 2003): 35-40.

<sup>11</sup> Translation: "the secularized world of a market society that [has] become imbecile."

protected and abused. When Harry discovers that his batty neighbor Mrs. Figg has been secretly watching him and that his aunt knows about the wizarding world, he is so shocked that his sense of place is knocked off balance, especially since his Aunt Petunia “usually put all her energies into pretending [the wizarding world] didn’t exist” (*Phoenix* 32). This discovery destabilizes Harry’s previous associations of Privet Drive as a place of privation and stupidity. His discovery is consonant with adolescent development. As adolescents mature, they find that binary ways of thinking, which are common to childhood, are no longer effective mental strategies. Harry’s experience challenges his knowledge of space and place as well as his understanding of his relatives.

The ambiguity of Number 4 Privet Drive as a place of both protection and punishment foreshadows the similar ambiguity of Hogwarts. As a place, the school is designed to be invisible to the non-Magical world and a safe-haven where Harry can mature as a wizard. Yet it is also the place where Lord Voldemort seeks Harry, threatening the boy’s life at the end of each volume. Like Rowling’s ambiguous characters who straddle the demarcations between kindness and malevolence, such as Severus Snape, Mundungus Fletcher, Rufus Scrimgeour, and Sirius Black, space and place are not diametrically opposed. Hated places, like Number 12 Grimmauld Place in *Order of the Phoenix* and Number 4 Privet Drive, can be safe havens. The spaces Harry visits in Voldemort’s mind are as enticing as they are dangerous. Safe spaces, like the campgrounds at the Quidditch World Cup in *Goblet of Fire* or the Hogwarts in *Deathly Hallows* can become lethal. Harry’s education lies in learning that his choice is not between place (enclosure, safety) or space (freedom, danger), but in accepting that the slippage between the two makes his decisions to act, as well as the consequences of his choices, ever more complex.



## Hogwarts: Temporary Utopia

If life at the Dursleys' house functions as the dystopia from which Harry wishes to escape, his admission into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry initially represents what Mary Pharr calls, "a 'real-time' child's wishful dream ..." (57). For Harry and the reader who identifies with him, Hogwarts castle is a utopia, inspiring wonder and amazement. Suddenly, the boy who "had no one" (*Sorcerer's* 30) finds himself acclaimed and welcomed by the cheers of his fellow Gryffindors. At Hogwarts, Harry finds that he "had never imagined such a strange and wonderful place" (*Sorcerer's* 116). His realization confirms Nicholas Sheltroun's claim that "Rowling vividly creates an immersive, persistent alternate world through which we can explore possibilities that the natural laws of our world don't allow" (47). In Hogwarts' classrooms, Harry and his classmates learn that they have the ability to transform the space that surrounds them: transfiguring matches into needles, learning charms, care of magical creatures, potions, and defense against the dark arts gradually build Hogwarts students' autonomy within the places they inhabit and prepare them to act within the unforeseen spaces in which they find themselves.

Exploring such possibilities, however, is by no means simple. Harry and his friends initially learn that while Hogwarts is a fairly safe place, it is not a stable one. Finding one's way at Hogwarts requires a mixture of cleverness and quick thinking, as evidenced by the castle's ever-shifting structure:

There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide, sweeping ones; narrow rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with a vanishing step halfway up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were doors that wouldn't open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the right place, and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending. It was also very hard to remember where everything was, because it all seemed to move around a lot. (*Sorcerer's* 131-132)

The architecture of the castle confronts its students with a world in which “very little stays still” (Cockrell 15) and in which they must think for themselves. As he travels through the Floo Network and Dumbledore’s pensieve, Harry is constantly challenged to reorient himself in space and time. Moreover, Hogwarts’ mobility challenges students to think critically about the spaces and places through which they move. Whereas the Dursley home is a place of excruciating stasis for Harry, Hogwarts invites his curiosity and challenges him to explore its hidden structures. Indeed, Dumbledore’s warnings against exploration, such as “the third-floor corridor on the right hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death” (*Sorcerer’s* 127), prove irresistible to a student Harry’s double resistance to adult authority that he has honed at Privet Drive and his desire to avenge his parents by fighting off Lord Voldemort.

Although Harry frequently misinterprets information he overhears, his rule-breaking occurs in the pursuit of knowledge, and confirms the ways in which Hogwarts functions as a place that encourages its students to think independently. Chappell, for example, points out that “Dumbledore does nothing to stop the resistant behavior—in fact, he encourages it” (286). Because students’ free time is relatively unsupervised, Maria Nikolajeva notes, this “absence of parental authority allows the space that the fictive child needs for development and maturity, in order to test (and taste his independence and to discover the world without adult protection)” (230). By fostering what Dumbledore calls Harry’s “disregard for rules” (*Chamber* 333) and giving him the invisibility cloak, the headmaster insures that Harry, Hermione and Ron will explore the forbidden spaces beyond Hogwarts’ boundaries. Their forays into Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom, the Shrieking Shack, and the hidden places containing the Mirror of Erised, the Sorcerer’s Stone, and the basilisk teach Harry, Hermione

and Ron that practicing spatial mobility requires the very linguistic competency of spells that they learn in Hogwarts' classrooms.

Hogwarts students learn that their pronouncements and utterances affect and alter the spaces they occupy. For Harry and his classmates, as for readers of the series, learning language means learning that words can create, enchant and protect spaces just as others can ruin, deny and annihilate them. As is the case for L'Homme's Guillemot in the chapter that follows, spells are an initiation into the power of language to transform space. The command "Lumos" brings light just as is antonym "Nox" extinguishes it; "Accio" brings an object to the speaker, just as Harry's own signature spell, "Expelliarmus," divests opponents of their wands. Spells and charms form the sheltered spaces of Harry, Hermione and Ron's campsites in *Deathly Hallows*; Lily Potter's charm protects the Dursley house from Voldemort; only students' expression of dire need calls the Room of Requirement, a secret and elusive space, into existence. Similarly, the unforgivable curses, "Imperio," "Crucio" and "Avada Kedavra," are metonymically linked to psychic destruction, physical pain, and death (imperio = control; crucio = crucify; kedavra = cadaver). More than magic, Rowling's spells suggest the power of language itself to change, alter, and transform space, and that such a power must be used with care and forethought.

In addition to the complexities of learning a new language with which to navigate space, students at Hogwarts find that their surroundings are infinitely more complicated than the places they have left behind. Drew Chappell explains that "as Harry and his friends age, they discover that where they had expected clear divisions and certain answers, they instead find subtleties and uncertainties" (283). A Hogwarts education involves sharing their new-found space with unpleasant beings like Hagrid's Blast-Ended Skewts, facing their own fears

in the forms of boggarts, and learning to accept the presence of the invisible horse-like thestrals. Ron's reaction to thestral flight epitomizes his frustration with the new and the different: "How're we supposed to get on?," said Ron faintly. "When we can't see the things?" (*Phoenix* 764). Like Pullman's Mary Malone who learns to view the *mulefa* animals as part of her own existence<sup>12</sup> Harry, Ron, and Hermione learn the importance of making space and room for the "others" in their midst, like Luna, Neville, and Ginny. If these latter are those Harry "would not have picked" (*Phoenix* 761) for a rescue mission, he realizes that in creating a space for members of Dumbledore's Army means he must include them in his quest against Voldemort.

As a place that makes room for a multiplicity of beings, not all of whom coexist peacefully, Hogwarts mirrors the maturation of Harry and his friends, who are themselves engaged in mental, emotional, and physical transformation. As adolescents, they share the desire to belong to a group of friends, to explore the ricocheting emotions of desire, jealousy, fear, gratitude, loneliness, independence, friendship and love. If Hogwarts' own movement is any indication, Harry and his friends experience similar internal shifts in each volume of the series. Just as the spaces within the castle and the places it occupies constantly change position, Rowling's characters repeatedly find themselves both at home and not at home; safe and in peril within its walls.

For many scholars, however, Hogwarts has served as a space of contention. Rowling situates Harry's first years at Hogwarts within the twin traditions of the British boarding school story, epitomized by Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) and Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co* (1899) and the British friendship mystery series, popularized by

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<sup>12</sup> See Mary's realization in *The Amber Spyglass*, "it's not *them*, they're *us*" (123; ital. orig.), discussed in chapter three.

Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* (1942-1963) and *Secret Seven* (1949-1963), to which Erik L'Homme's work is also frequently compared. Rowling's spatial organization of four separate competing houses (Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin) and her division between wizards and house elves have led quite a number of scholars to question her series as a conservative return to the traditional Victorian hierarchies of class, heredity and privilege.<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Tucker contends that "the Potter books still celebrate the notion of a different and exclusive form of education for a privileged few" (223), while Gupta argues that the books' "liberal and well-meaning and anti-fascist veneer ... is undercut under closer scrutiny by a deeper form of racism in the Magic world" (160). Zipes and Farah Mendlesohn maintain that because the spaces in Rowling's magical world are so akin to the reader's world, her series does little more than encourage readers' passive acceptance of the inequalities at work their own world<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Zipes's opinion that "Rowling's protagonists set the world aright without questioning the real conflicts that the majority of children in the United Kingdom and North America face" (183). For more readings that challenge what one might call Rowling's problematic elitism, see Giselle Liza Anatol's essay, "The Fallen Empire: Exploring Ethnic Otherness in the World of Harry Potter" (pp. 163-178), Elaine Ostry's "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J. K. Rowling's Fairy Tales" (pp. 89-101), and Julia Park's "Class and Socioeconomic Identity in Harry Potter's England" (pp. 179-189), all of which take issue with what they view as Rowling's Eurocentric and patriarchal approach to the fantasy genre. All essays are located in Anatol's first volume *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the most frequently-cited critique of Rowling's misogyny is Farah Mendlesohn's reading of Hermione Granger's second-class status in which Mendlesohn argues that Hermione "can only be liked by association, or when she chooses to conform and will never be permitted to be anything other than second-in-command" (174). See Mendlesohn's "Crowning the King: Harry Potter and the Construction of Authority" in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2002). Pierre Bruno offers a similar reading of Hermione's second-tier status in "Une victoire du conservatisme et du sexisme ? Harry Potter" in *La culture de l'enfance à l'heure de la mondialisation* (Paris: InPress, 2002): 195-212.

It is worth noting however, that many of these essays were published before the final volume of the series. Bruno, for instance, uses Ron's criticism of Hermione in "TU ES UNE SORCIÈRE OU QUOI?"/"ARE YOU A WITCH OR WHAT?" (278) from the first volume, *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* as evidence of Rowling's sexism (201). Hermione, however, reverses this paradigm in *The Deathly Hallows* when she asks Ron the same question, "Are you a wizard or what?" (651; ital. orig.), suggesting that Hermione and Rowling can give the same criticism they receive.

To the contrary, I argue that the space of Rowling's wizarding world *intentionally replicates* the racism, bigotry, and class conflict in the reader's own world, with the explicit purpose of forcing readers to reflect on potential responses to these issues in their own lives. Rowling's overt depictions of inequality pits the Weasley family's poverty and lack of space against Draco Malfoy's malicious comments ("I'll bet your family all sleep in one room—is that true?" [*Prisoner* 279]). The wizarding world's reliance on house-elf labor, and its history of mistreatment of goblins and giants leads Cary Brycchan to note how Harry's world "continuously invites the reader to draw parallels with the world beyond her text" (162). Even if the wizarding world, with its wands, spells, and polyjuice potions, appears more appealing than the reader's, this fictional space is nonetheless plagued by the very problems of poverty, insensitivity, prejudice and abuse of power that are evident in our own world. The inclusion of these problems within the space of the narrative suggests that it is disingenuous to construct a fantastic space that does not in some ways suffer from the same arbitrary divisions, pettiness, and intolerance with which readers are also familiar in the places they live, work, and study.<sup>15</sup> To make this point explicit, Dumbledore's speech at the end of *Goblet of Fire* is an argument that preserving Hogwarts as a place requires inclusion, trust and interdependence: "We can only fight [Voldemort] by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open" (723). It is only by being open and by making a space for the new, the different, and the "other," and by including those others within the very places we claim for ourselves, that evil can be vanquished.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example Karin E. Westman's article, "Specters of Thatcherism: Contemporary British Culture in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series" in which she argues that "the tensions between Mudbloods, pure bloods, and Muggles, echo the fervent tensions between race and class in the "real" contemporary British body politic..." (323). For Kate Behr, "[t]he wizarding world exists only in relation to the "real" world, echoing/mirroring all its customs and discourse, and thus reflects our Muggle world—transformed by narrative" (261).

It is no mistake that this promotion of tolerance and unity coincides with Voldemort's return. Despite its many charms and protective spells, Hogwarts becomes an increasingly dangerous place, as is evidenced by the warning that non-magical Muggles see when they approach it. As Hermione explains, "If a Muggle looks at [Hogwarts], all they see is a moldering old ruin with a sign over the entrance saying DANGER, DO NOT ENTER, UNSAFE" (*Goblet* 166). The warning could just as easily apply to its students, and confirms Chappell's argument that "Harry's world is a confusing and dangerous place" (292). The dangers within its caverns, bathrooms, pipes, secret chambers, and lake<sup>16</sup> are an indication that Harry's survival as well as those of his friends—is predicated on their willingness to break rules and forego their own safety in order to negotiate the terrors within such spaces and to save those trapped within them.

### **Space of Resistance and Hope: The Room of Requirement**

In her analysis of the uses of terror in Rowling's series, Courtney Strimel contends that the first major fissure between the normal world of Great Britain and the wizarding world is the Death Eaters' torture of Muggles at the Quidditch World Cup in *Goblet of Fire* (38). In contrast to Strimel, I argue that it is not until the beginning of *Order of the Phoenix* that Harry himself realizes that the boundaries between both worlds are pulling apart. Rowling's language captures Harry's own sense of disequilibrium: "The arrival of the dementors in Little Whinging seemed to have caused a breach in the great, invisible wall that divided the relentlessly non-magical world of Privet Drive from the world beyond" (*Phoenix*

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<sup>16</sup> For a reading of Rowling's use of medieval sources as a basis for Hogwarts, see Alessandre Petrina's "Forbidden Forest, Enchanted Castle: Arthurian Spaces in the Harry Potter Novels" in *Mythlore* 93/94 (2006): 95-110). For an analysis specific to Hogwarts' sewer system in light of Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and excrement, see Alice Mills's article, "Harry Potter and the Terrors of the Toilet" in *Children's Literature in Education*: 37.1 (2006): 1-13. Unlike the present project, these sources focus solely on individual places—the forest and the passage in Myrtle's toilet—whereas this project considers multiple spaces and places within the series as a whole.

37). This fissure between worlds marks an equally important schism between the spaces open to adolescents and those open to their elders. Dumbledore, usually a wise mentor, disappears from view; adult members of the Order of the Phoenix, such as Sirius Black and Remus Lupin, sequester themselves at Number 12 Grimmauld Place. Like its name suggests, this “Place” is both grim and old; it is no place for the young. As young adults Harry, Hermione, Ron and the Weasley siblings are relegated to the sidelines. The result is that when they return to Hogwarts, Harry and his friends must cope alone with the Ministry’s takeover of their school under the vice-grip of Dolores Umbridge.

Just as Harry and the Weasley siblings are pushed away by adults wishing to protect them, the adolescent protagonists in L’Homme’s *Le Livre des Étoiles*, are also treated as children, not young adults. When they arrive in the Uncertain World to rescue Guillemot from the Shadow, they are told: “Allons les enfants...la guerre est une affaire d’adultes! ...vous devez être raisonnables!” (*Visage* 157).<sup>17</sup> As is the case for Guillemot’s *coterie*, Harry and his friends have no choice but to transgress the very boundaries meant to protect them. By denying these young adults a literal “place at the table,” the adults in Rowling’s series unwittingly force them to find spaces in which they too can resist Voldemort’s incursions into the Wizarding and Muggle worlds. Harry and his friends knowingly move into spaces that have previously been forbidden and off-limits. As Chappell points out,

adults in contemporary society and in Harry Potter’s world persist in trapping the students in the becoming space, denying them knowledge and privileges because they have not reached an arbitrary and unitary developmental marker. (289-90).

For Harry especially, agency takes the form of subversive transgression. Because he is unwilling to be trapped in a “becoming space,” he refuses to submit to Umbridge’s orders

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<sup>17</sup> Translation: “Come, now children...War is an adult affair. ..you should be reasonable.”



and repeatedly questions the excessive limits Umbridge places on her students. Harry's activism, his breaching of literal boundaries by calling for the Room of Requirement and Hermione's transgressive walk into the Forbidden Forest, where Umbridge will meet her comeuppance,<sup>18</sup> force Rowling's readers to consider the arbitrary demarcations and boundaries that Rowling's adults impose upon her young adult protagonists.

Indeed, breaching boundaries within the place of Umbridge's classroom (and Hogwarts at large) is woefully easy because Umbridge allows students no liberty at all.<sup>19</sup> Hermione dares to disagree with the assigned reading, and Harry openly acknowledges the return of Voldemort. Umbridge turns her classroom—and Hogwarts more generally—into a carceral place, entrapping students and assigning them to “do lines” in their own blood. As a result, Harry and his fellow students face the fact that their school is no longer the safe haven it has been. Moreover, Umbridge's self-installation as High Inquisitor of Hogwarts is reminiscent of the Shadow Charlefaq's equal willingness to torture Guillemot in L'Homme's *Le Visage de L'Ombre* and of Pullman's General Oblation Board to torment children and witches mercilessly in *His Dark Materials*. Umbridge's presence at Hogwarts confirms the ways in which the school ceases to be a place of safety. Instead Hogwarts (like the wizarding

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<sup>18</sup> Just as places and spaces are polyvalent throughout Rowling's series, Hermione's decision to enter the forest with Umbridge in tow is both a resistant act and one of adolescent naiveté. Although the centaurs carry off Umbridge as she expects, Hermione is forced to realize that her plan was predicated on her own culturally-limited sense of the centaurs' society. Her explanation, “We only came in here because we hoped you'd drive her off for us—” (*Phoenix* 756) is met with the centaurs' fury that she has used them for her own ends: “So we were to do your dirty work, were we, human girl? We were to act as your servants, drive away your enemies like obedient hounds?” (*Phoenix* 756). This exchange signals the cultural complexity with which Rowling expects her protagonists and readers to contend. Moreover, the centaurs inability to decide if Hermione and Harry are adults (and thus worthy of punishment) or children (who cannot be harmed) parallels the similar debates among the adult members of The Order of the Phoenix about how much information to divulge to Harry, Hermione, and the Weasley siblings.

<sup>19</sup> As Damour notes, in Umbridge's classroom, “real teenagers and Rowling's teenagers have to share the misery of having to deal with adults who deny the reality, and risks, of that which lies plainly all around them” (3).

world as a whole) becomes a dangerous dystopia in which boundary-crossing is punished and within which subversion and transgression are the only means of resistance available to Harry and his classmates.

As a result, Harry and his friends cross the figurative border from quiet safety into the adult space of subversion, autonomy, and responsibility by forming Dumbledore's Army in the Room of Requirement.<sup>20</sup> Harry and his friends' ability to resist is predicated on having a secret space in which to practice the very Defense Against the Dark Arts Umbridge refuses to teach them.<sup>21</sup> This space, or Room of Requirement, is hinted at by Dumbledore in the previous volume, suggesting that the Hogwarts Headmaster knows his students will need a subversive space. Such a space, however, is not a constant. It can only come into existence in the hour of one's greatest need:

it is a room that a person can only enter," said Dobby seriously, "when they have real need of it. Sometimes it is there, and sometimes it is not, but when it appears, it is always equipped for the seeker's needs. (*Phoenix* 386-387)

Given its imprecise location, un-plottable and constantly changing nature, Hogwarts' Room of Requirement recalls Foucault's definition of heterotopias as "those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others" ("Space, Knowledge, and Power" 376). As an inversion of Umbridge's class, that begins with the directive, "wands away" (*Phoenix* 239), the Room of Requirement functions

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<sup>20</sup> For additional readings on the subversive agency of Rowling's young adult characters, see Drew Chappell's excellent article, "Sneaking Out After Dark: Resistance, Agency, and the Postmodern Child in JK Rowling's Harry Potter Series" in *Children's Literature in Education* 39 (2008): 281-293 and Tracy L. Bealer's essay, "(Dis)Order and the Phoenix: Love and Political Resistance in Harry Potter" in Giselle L. Anatol's second collection, *Reading Harry Potter Again* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009): 75-190.

<sup>21</sup> Umbridge's pedagogical course goals read as a pedagogical indictment of teachers who expect their students to regurgitate material necessary for state exams without acquiring any practical skills they can use outside in the world the classroom (*Phoenix* 240). As Umbridge herself states, "it is the view of the Ministry that theoretical knowledge will be more than sufficient to get you through your examination, which is what school is all about" (*Phoenix* 243)

as a space in which Harry can teach his classmates the skills they will need to resist Voldemort's dementors and death eaters in *The Deathly Hallows*.

Their conscious subversion is, however, dependent on space. As French phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard writes, "[s]pace calls for action, and before action, imagination is at work" (90). Because Harry and his friends can remember the Hogwarts of the past, they can also imagine their school as a place without Umbridge. Using the space of the Room of Requirement to subvert her control, Harry experiences a surge of pride. Their transgression reinvigorates the student body with hope. Harry recognizes the power of his peers' newfound subversive agency: "He and the D.A. were resisting her under her very nose, doing the very thing that she and the Ministry most feared..." (*Phoenix* 397). Having a space like the Room of Requirement means having a fighting chance at freedom, and space is absolutely necessary for the transformation of the Hogwarts' student body into a cohesive, active force for change in an increasingly dystopic school environment. Against all odds, Harry and his classmates not only create a space of their own; they create a memory of that space which saves their lives. It is no accident that when Harry, Hermione and Ron nearly succumb to Voldemort's dementors, Luna reminds him of the space in which they were once happy and free:

"That's right," Luna said encouragingly, as if they were back in the Room of Requirement and this was simply spell practice for the D.A. "That's right, Harry...come on, think of something happy." [...]  
"We're all here," she whispered, "we're still fighting. Come on..." (*Deathly Hallows* 649)

Luna's link between space and happiness recalls the strength and hope Harry drew from his classmates' improvement as well as Lyra's own surprise when she plots the escape from Bolvangar in Pullman's *The Golden Compass*: "Lyra marveled at the effect hope could have"

(267).<sup>22</sup> In both cases, hope—defined here as the possibility that space can once again be safe and free for other Hogwarts students—gives Harry and his companions the impetus to continue forward, even as their proximity to Hogwarts itself puts them in mortal danger. Yet as any reader of Rowling’s series knows, however dangerous Hogwarts may be, it is a place worth the fighting.

### **Campgrounds: Liminal Spaces**

For Rowling as for Pullman, spaces are never univalent. Just as Pullman’s narrative emphasizes the importance of knowledgeable choices,<sup>23</sup> the choice that Harry, Ron and Hermione make not to return to their place at Hogwarts in *The Deathly Hallows* serves a protective function even as it frustrates them with their lack of direction. The group’s travel situates all three young adults in spaces of uncertainty as they wander from space to space, a physical movement that mimics their own indecision and adolescence.

Even without any new ideas, they continued to move through the countryside, pitching the tent in a different place each night for security. Every morning, they made sure that they had removed all clues to their presence, then set off to find another lonely and secluded spot, traveling by Apparition to more woods, to shadowy crevices on cliffs, to purple moors, gorse-covered mountainsides, and once a sheltered and pebbly cove. (*Deathly Hallows* 290)

Because these spaces bear no relationship to each other, they function as “any-spaces-  
whatever” (*des espaces quelconques*) as defined by French theorist Gilles Deleuze.<sup>24</sup> Each

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of Bolvangar as a dystopic space, see chapter three.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Iorek’s declaration that “full knowledge is better than half knowledge....Know what it is you are asking” (AS 182), the agony of Lyra’s choice to abandon Pantalaimon in order to travel to the world of the dead (AS 283), and Will Parry’s response to the witch Xaphania, “Whatever I do, I will choose it, no one else” (AS 496).

<sup>24</sup> In *Cinéma I: L’Image-Mouvement* (1983) Deleuze defines the “any-space-whatever” or “espace quelconque” as: “L’espace quelconque n’est pas un universel abstrait, en tout temps, en tout lieu. C’est un espace parfaitement singulier, qui a seulement perdu son homogénéité, c’est-à-dire le principe de ses propres parties, si bien que les raccordements peuvent se faire d’une infinité de façons” (155). / Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam’s translation of this passage reads: “the any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal in in all times, in all spaces. It is a perfectly singular space which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle

spell-protected campsite situates the space as different from the surrounding space, even if such difference is invisible to those on the outside. As spaces of temporary refuge, the campgrounds are both limited and liminal, forcing Ron and Hermione to choose between loyalty to Harry and their doubts about their mission. Regarding Deleuze's any-space-whatever, Tamsin Lorraine notes that "the alternative conception of space that emerges...challenge[s] the reader not only to think but experience reality differently" (160). This experience is no less true for all three protagonists, who realize that even within the spaces they occupy, they are in constant danger of discovery and capture. After six predictable years at Hogwarts, Harry, Hermione and Ron now occupy space similar to that of Lorraine's "nomadic subject" who must be "open to unconventional spatial orientations" and "can make new connections in keeping with the movement of life as it unfolds" (160). Likewise, Ron, Hermione and Harry have to piece together their next moves from a variety of mistakes and misleading information, making connections between information they have and new information they receive. These new connections are emotional as well; as a group they must learn to accept each other's strengths and weaknesses in the process.

Moreover, it is in the course of their wanderings that Harry and Hermione witness how vulnerable and tenuous place can be. When Harry visits the ruins of his parents' home in Godric's Hollow he sees a place destroyed, both by Voldemort's wrath and his mother's protective charm: When Harry visits the ruins of his parents' home in Godric's Hollow he sees a place destroyed, both by Voldemort's wrath and his mother's protective charm:

the rubble lay scattered against the waist-high grass. Most of the cottage was still standing, though entirely covered in dark ivy and snow, but the right side of the top

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of its metric relations or connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways" (109).

floor had been blown apart, that, Harry was sure, was where the curse had backfired. (*Deathly Hallows* 332)

In the snow-covered cavity of his childhood home, Harry sees a place of safety and love forever destroyed, leaving only grief and misery in its stead. Yet here again, Rowling challenges readers' (and Harry's) understanding of place by inscribing the ruins with messages of hope: "Good luck, Harry, wherever you are! If you read this, Harry, we're all behind you, Harry! Long live Harry Potter!" (*Deathly Hallows* 333). For the wizarding community, as for Harry, the place of his earliest childhood has become a monument to the enormity of his parents' sacrifice and a reminder of Voldemort's violent power to eradicate those places of safety and family. More importantly, it is a place that encourages Harry in his quest, providing him with the hope he needs to face Voldemort alone, just as his parents did.

Ultimately, the any-spaces-whatever of Harry, Hermione and Ron's campgrounds yield to places. The group's capture takes them to the dangerous Malfoy Manor, a place of torture and imprisonment. Via Dobby's sacrificial death, Harry, Ron and Hermione escape to the safety of place at Shell Cottage. In stark contrast to the Manor's cold chambers, the cottage is at once hidden and idyllic, and provides Rowling's protagonists with a chance to consider the places they will visit next in their journey. The cottage's isolation allows for a narrative détente and gives Harry the chance to consider the decisions he and his companions have made. Moreover, Harry's choice to remain *in place* marks one of the few times he chooses safety and stillness. Like his earlier travels from campground to campground, Harry's decision to remain is marked by uncertainty:

The enormity of his decision not to race Voldemort to the wand still scared Harry. He could not remember, ever before, choosing *not* to act. He was full of doubts...He felt that he was still groping in the dark; he had chosen his path but kept looking back,

wondering whether he had misread the signs, whether he should not have taken the other way. (*Deathly Hallows* 502-503)

As we see with Pullman's treatment of choice in chapter three, Rowling also emphasizes Harry's choices as well as the paths he does not choose, such as racing Voldemort to the Elderwand. Harry's refusal to race Voldemort to Hogwarts indicates how place differs for Harry and Voldemort. Voldemort—who has never had a place to call home—wrecks havoc on places that will demonstrate his will to power. Harry, by contrast carries his sense of place and home within himself. His memories and the artifacts he carries of those who have loved him (his photograph album, the false Horcrux, Sirius' broken mirror) make place internal rather than external. This sense of internal place gives Harry the courage to move from away from safety towards the space of mortal peril that Voldemort's extinction demands.

From the safety of place at Shell Cottage, Harry, Hermione and Ron return to places of increasing danger: Gringott's Bank, The Hog's Head, and finally (through the tavern's secret passage) to Hogwarts itself. Their movement towards place gradually decreases the space between Harry and Voldemort, whose proximity and similarities have been part of Rowling's entire seven-volume cycle. In the space and time of his years at Hogwarts, Harry has come to know the boy once named Tom Riddle, but he has also gained self-knowledge that gives him hope: his choices have not been for power or gain but for others' sakes. Harry's choice to confront Voldemort bears out Dumbledore's earlier assertion that "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (*Chamber* 333). For Rowling's readers, the message is clear: we may not be the smartest, strongest, wittiest or the bravest; we may be more Nevilles and Lunas than Harrys or Hermiones, but we can still

choose the spaces and places in which we act. Even as our choices may grieve us, the spaces and places in which we find ourselves give us the opportunity to act with courage and hope.

### **King's Cross: Going On and Going Back**

When Harry, Ron and Hermione make their final return from space to place, they face a Hogwarts scarcely recognizable from the one they knew. The presence of Voldemort's political allies has transformed the school into pure dystopia.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Harry is also different. By rejecting his fascination with the Deathly Hallows, Harry is in full command of his own choices and spaces. When Voldemort taunts him with using space as a means of hiding, "you've crouched and sniveled behind the skirts of greater men and women, and permitted me to kill them for you!" (*Deathly Hallows* 738), Harry walks into the Forbidden Forest. Ironically, the Forest as a space has been off-limits to Hogwarts' students, but Voldemort's challenge makes the place of Hogwarts off-limits to Harry. Moreover, Harry's mental and emotional growth during his journey from and to Hogwarts allows him to eschew protection. As he walks towards the place of his death, the space around Harry is filled by the presence of all those adults who have loved him and died for him, and whose love remains "in his very skin" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 299). Harry is surrounded by his parents Lily and James, his godfather Sirius, and former teacher Lupin. Their closeness, their spatial and emotional proximity to Harry, gives him the courage to move forward, even as his destination, the place towards which he walks, is into Voldemort's hands.

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<sup>25</sup> See for example Neville Longbottom's summary of the seventh year at Hogwarts: " 'It's been...well, it's not really like Hogwarts anymore,' said Neville..." (*Deathly Hallows* 573-575).



Like many of his authority-defying acts, Harry's sacrificial (some would argue Christ-like) decision to die by Voldemort's wand is a subversive one.<sup>26</sup> Voldemort, whose name deconstructs into *flight* (vol) + *from* (de) + *death* (mort), is too afraid to die. Harry, however, accepts death and in so doing rebels against Voldemort's desire to destroy. Harry's courage, his ability to "go on" in spite of his fear, sends him into one last space—a space that is geographically and temporally unplotable in both Muggle and wizarding worlds and lacking definition:

He lay in a bright mist, thought it was not like mist he had ever experienced before. His surroundings were not hidden by cloudy vapor; rather the cloudy vapor had not yet formed into surroundings. The floor on which he lay seemed to be white, neither warm nor cold, but simply there, a flat surface on which to be. (*Deathly Hallows* 706)

As an *any-space-whatever*, this space in which Harry finds himself is "perfectly singular" (Deleuze 109). Although Harry experiences himself as alive, he shares the space with his mentor Dumbledore, even though Harry witnessed Dumbledore's physical death in *Half-Blood Prince*. By contrast, the undefined figure in the corner—a representation of Voldemort's remains—is more dead than alive. Just as Deleuze writes that the any-space-whatever is a space whose "linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways" (109), the space in which Harry finds himself invites an infinity of options; he must choose in which spaces and places he will make the rest of his life.

Because of its indeterminacy, this space between life and death offers Harry a choice. He can return to a world of his friends and classmates. Alternatively, he can make the more ambiguous choice "go on"—to explore the uncharted territory beyond death—the very space

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<sup>26</sup> See Leonie Caldecott's comment that "Rowling never loses sight of the ultimate goal, which is ultimately Christocentric if not overtly Christian. The power that originally saved Harry's life was simply his mother's love: this power, and not some spell, imbued him with protection against Voldemort. It is a protection that carries him through the books, and eventually carries him through the most difficult task of all" (25).

Voldemort so fears. The misty vagueness of the space that gradually transforms into a version of the King's Cross train station signifies all that we cannot know about the spaces where such choices lead. The train station is by definition ambiguous because it renders destination, the place of one's arrival, unknowable, and thus reveals the limits of knowledge and conjecture.

At the same time, the presence of the repulsively mangled and deformed creature within this space—the last remnant of Voldemort's disfigured soul—suggests that Harry's choice to grow up, to live and to accept the inevitability of his own eventual death as “the next great adventure” (*Sorcerer's* 297) is the more heroic path. As his name suggests, Voldemort has moved *through* space (“flight”/vol), he has never accepted the challenge of living in it. Virginia Zimmerman points out that Harry's “complex relation to the past evolves, while Voldemort's remains static” (194). Voldemort, unlike Harry, has never learned that accepting adulthood means the closing-off of once-open spaces and the eventual openings of other ones. He will never be able to go “on” as will Dumbledore and Rowling's other heroes. Trapped in the disfigured grotesque's body, he will be unable to move, to choose, or to accept alternative possibilities and spaces. By dividing his soul into horcruxes that he scatters throughout the places of the narrative, Voldemort ensures that no final space will be open to him. His final form offers him neither escape nor hope. Unlike the any-space-whatever in which he lies wailing, he will be helpless, nameless, and lacking in definition; no “infinite number of ways” will remain.

In conclusion, the responsibility that Harry accepts, to return to a place in desperate need of him in need of him, “a world of pain and fear of more loss” (*Hallows* 722) suggests that it would be a mistake for readers to confine themselves to the fictional space of

Rowling's Potterverse. To go "on" means to accept the gifts of fantasy as well as its limits. As readers, we cannot help enjoying the mental spaces fantasy creates for us. Nor can we stop ourselves from wondering about the people and places Rowling's text brings to life, and to which Rowling herself has added since the publication of the final volume.<sup>27</sup> Yet ultimately, the hope fantasy offers us is the hope that we will have the courage to move into those terrifying, wonderful, and uncharted spaces beyond the text. Just as the places within Rowling's series need Harry's help, the places and spaces in our world—some defined, some unclear—remain in need of our help and commitment. If it is true that fantasy sends us into new spaces and uncharted territories, it is equally true that it always brings us back, usually to the very places in need of the knowledge we gain on that journey.

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<sup>27</sup> A simple internet search for "J. K. Rowling" or "Harry Potter" will avail readers of an enormity of the author's post-series interviews in which she speaks about the future lives of her characters.

## Chapter Two

### Harry Potter Goes to France: Exploring the Multiple

#### Worlds of Erik L’Homme’s *Le Livre des Étoiles*

##### Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the “arrival” of fantasy in France and the genre’s new-found legitimacy as a subject for scholarly analysis. In contrast to Rowling and Pullman who write for readers of all ages, I situate Erik L’Homme as an *auteur-jeunesse*, or youth author who writes specifically for adolescent readers. After a brief review of the reception of L’Homme’s trilogy, *Le Livre des Étoiles* (*The Book of the Stars*) in France and in English translation, I discuss its relationship to its parent-text, Rowling’s *Harry Potter* cycle. I note the ways in which L’Homme deliberately recreates, reinvents and plays upon Rowling’s fictional world of wizard heroes. While these similarities provide a point of departure, this chapter also explores how L’Homme’s use of three different worlds (The Realm of Ys, The Certain World, and the Uncertain World) allows for an ecological critique of the reader’s world. Similarly, I argue that L’Homme’s work follows the current trend of fantasy narratives in teaching readers to think critically about moral injustices and ethical uncertainties in their own world. This chapter examines the ways in which L’Homme’s narrative asks readers to reflect on their own environment, and also works to instill an appreciation of difference and diversity. Despite these twin tendencies, my reading also reviews the ways in which L’Homme’s trilogy perhaps unwittingly perpetuates the same

imperialist impulses it critiques, suggesting that the subversive qualities we often celebrate in young adult literature are perhaps more difficult to confront than we might wish to believe.

### ***La Fantasy: A Genre Transformed***

Harry Potter, Tara Duncan, Artemis Fowl, Cyperpan, Eragon, Ewilan, Redwall, Spiderwick ... In the last two decades, young adult fantasy has undergone a seismic shift from its erstwhile position as *sous-littérature* or *mauvais genre* to what comparatist Sandra Beckett calls “the darling of the literary marketplace” (161). French scholars agree. Writing in *Fantastique, Fantasy, Science-Fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (2005), André-François Ruaud writes that “la fantasy s’impose définitivement comme la figure de proue de l’imaginaire en notre début de XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle” (161).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Jean Perrot, director of the Institut International Charles Perrault, admits that “la fantasy [est] devenue le créneau commercial par excellence” (93).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, such is the overriding nature of fantasy that it is now a commonplace among scholars to begin their own articles with broad declarations of the genre’s popularity and by extension, its importance as a twenty-first century cultural phenomenon.

The transformation of fantasy from poor relation into heir apparent echoes the similar shift in the ways in which literature for children and young adults has also gained acceptance as a legitimate field of scholarly study in recent years. “Children’s literature,” writes Laurie Langbauer, “has become so mainstream that it is impossible to ignore” (502). For Langbauer, one indicator of the legitimacy of fiction for children and young adults is the publication of *The Norton Anthology of Children’s Literature* (2005), although one could

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “Fantasy is definitively imposing itself as the foremost figure of the imaginary at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

<sup>2</sup> Translation: “Fantasy [has] become the commercial niche par excellence.”

easily argue that her own article's appearance in the Modern Language Association's *PMLA* journal is equally indicative of the status now accorded to children's and young adult fiction.<sup>3</sup>

This shift is also evident in France, where children's literature has traditionally been less visible as a scholarly field than in Great Britain and the United States. Thanks in large part to what has now been dubbed "the Harry Potter effect"—"*l'effet Harry Potter*" in France—fantasy in particular has been at the forefront of the critical reappraisal of young adult literature. Chronicling fantasy's "arrival" in France in the journal *Livres Hebdo*, Laure Bourdoncle explains that the true measure of the genre's status is not its strong sales figures but its acceptance as a subject for study within the French academy: "Les doctorants n'hésitent plus à rédiger des thèses sur le sujet et les éditeurs à les publier" (76).<sup>4</sup> Her assertion is substantiated by the publication of Anne Besson and Myriam White-Le Goff's *Fantasy: le merveilleux médiéval aujourd'hui* (2007), the first French collection of scholarly essays dedicated to "la fantasy." Moreover in 2008-2009, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris devoted an entire exposition to fiction for children and young adult readers entitled, "Babar, Harry Potter et C<sup>ie</sup>." By all accounts, then, young adult fantasy is now clearly ensconced in academic and popular establishments on both sides of the Channel.

Despite the recent proliferation of French texts on children's and youth literature in general<sup>5</sup> and fantasy in particular<sup>6</sup>, as well as a host of articles exploring the roots and rise of

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<sup>3</sup> See also the work of Jack Zipes, Sandra Beckett, Gillian Brown, Maria Nikolajeva, James Kincaid, Kenneth Kidd and Rachel Falconer.

<sup>4</sup> Translation: "[French] doctoral students no longer hesitate to write dissertations on the subject nor editors to publish them."

<sup>5</sup> In addition to the texts by Beckett, Raymond Perrin and Penny Brown noted in the introduction, recent scholarly work on French children's and young adult literature include the collections, *Du Livre au Jeu: points de vue sur la culture de jeunesse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), *Du Local à l'Universel: Espaces Imaginaires et*

*la fantasy* as a genre in *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Livres Hebdo*,<sup>7</sup> references and access to French fantasy writing for *la jeunesse* continue to be difficult to find, particularly for scholars outside France. French fantasy has not benefited from the critical foci that scholars of all stripes and nationalities have brought to bear on Rowling and Pullman's texts. While French writers may mention French fantasy authors such as Léa Sihol, Mathieu Gaborit, Fabrice Colin, Erik L'Homme and Pierre Bottero, sustained and detailed analyses of their work remain absent. This lack of rigorous close-reading suggests that young adult fantasy is perhaps not as safe as Bourdoncle assumes.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, Rowling and Pullman's respective series have inspired so many journal articles, conference proceedings, essay collections, and book-length studies for scholarly and popular audiences that it would be impossible to mention them all here.

As Jean Perrot explained in the introduction, the current invisibility of French fantasy in English-language criticism is due to the dominance of English-language books in the young adult book market, as well as the prominence of English as the language of

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*Identités dans la Littérature d'enfance* (Suceava: EUS, 2007), *Littérature de Jeunesse, incertaines frontières* (Paris: Gallimard Jeunesse, 2005), and *Perspectives contemporaines du roman pour la jeunesse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003). See also Dorothée Coppel's critical bibliographie in Jean Perrot's *Mondialisation et littérature de jeunesse* (Paris: Électre, 2008): 361-372.

<sup>6</sup> On young adult French fantasy, see André-François Ruaud's chapter, "France: Les enfants d'Orphée et de Mélusine" in *Panorama illustré de la fantasy et du merveilleux* (Lyon: Moutons Électriques, 2004): 392-407. See also Ruaud's *Cartographie du merveilleux* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), Jacques Baudou's *La Fantasy: Que sais-je?* (Paris: PUF, 2005), Jacques Goimard's *Critique du merveilleux et de la fantasy* (Paris: Agora, 2003) and Léa Sihol and Estelle Valls de Gomis' collection, *Fantastique, Fantasy, Science-Fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> See Isabelle Smadja, "L'amour maternel rend les enfants invulnérables." *Le Figaro* 27 Nov. 2003: 4-5, Jacques Baudou's articles, "Hexagonale Fantasy" *Le Monde* 4 July 2003, and "Tour du monde de l'imaginaire: Une sélection de livres de fantasy pour la jeunesse" *Le Monde* 30 June 2006, and "The French Fantastic Touch" *Livres Hebdo* 23 Nov 2007, "Une seule quête, plusieurs fantasy" *Livres Hebdo* 1 Feb. 2008 and "Une revue pour la fantasy" *Livres Hebdo* 20 May 2005.

<sup>8</sup> The two notable exceptions are Philippe Clermont's article, "Une fantasy Française à l'école des sorciers ou les avatars d'Harry" in *Fantasy, le merveilleux médiéval aujourd'hui* (Paris: Bragelonne, 2007): 185-198, and Denis Labbé's article "De l'intertextualité dans la *fantasy* française" in *Iris* 24 (2003): 303-311.

scholarship and criticism. In an effort to reduce that invisibility, the following chapter considers how L’Homme’s approach to fantasy differs from better-known authors such as Rowling and Pullman. One major difference between L’Homme and Bottero’s respective fantasy series and those of their English-speaking counterparts is how they approach the issue of audience. Along with Rowling and Pullman, current English-language authors such as Mark Haddon, Neil Gaimon, and Daniel Handler practice crosswriting, or books with popular appeal to all age groups.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, L’Homme and Bottero remain firmly in the camp of *littérature de jeunesse*.<sup>10</sup> Both authors refer frequently to their interactions with children and adolescent readers and affirm those readers—not adults—as their primary readership.<sup>11</sup>

As we saw in the introduction, L’Homme and Bottero’s respective series have received brief critical attention from Raymond Perrin and Penny Brown, and are frequently mentioned in various French professional and trade journals for educators and librarians, among them *Lecture Jeune*, *Griffon* and *La revue des livres pour enfants*. In addition, L’Homme’s first volume, *Qadehar le Sorcier* received the 2001 Prix Jeunesse du Festival International de Géographie de Saint-Dié-des-Vosges and his second volume, *Le Seigneur Sha* was the 2002 recipient of the prix des Collégiens du Var, which indicate the series’

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<sup>9</sup> On crosswriting and the crossover novel, see Rachel Falconer’s *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children’s Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2008) and Sandra Beckett’s *Crosswriting: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Mark Haddon is the author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* (2003). Neil Gaimon has written *Stardust* (1993), *Coraline* (2002) and *American Gods* (2001). Daniel Handler is the creator of the popular *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2002-2006) written under the pseudonym, Lemony Snicket.

<sup>11</sup> See L’Homme’s interviews with Laure Ricote at <<http://www.actusf.com/spip/article-3003.html>> and Nathalie LaCube in *La-Croix* 4 July 2007 and Bottero’s June 2007 interview from the Salon du Livre de Montreuil with Elbakin.net at <<http://www.elbakin.net/fantasy/news/Une-interview-avec-Pierre-Bottero>> in which he declares, “[j]e suis auteur jeunesse.” See also Bottero’s essay, “Donner vie à des créatures: l’imaginaire d’un auteur” at Rageot’s site for imaginary worlds at <[http://www.lesmondesimaginairesderageot.com/univers/auteur/popup\\_surprises.asp?cd\\_univers=EWILAN&id=29](http://www.lesmondesimaginairesderageot.com/univers/auteur/popup_surprises.asp?cd_univers=EWILAN&id=29)>.



enthusiastic reception in France. Writing in *Panorama illustré de la fantasy et du merveilleux* (2004), French fantasy scholar André-François Ruaud distinguishes between those writers who merely reproduce “non pas des *œuvres* mais des *lieux communs*” (400; ital. orig.) and L’Homme’s work, which unlike the former “présente de réelles qualités qui la rendent très attachante” (401).<sup>12</sup>

Conversely, British and American criticism of the translation of *The Book of the Stars* has been mixed at best. *Kirkus Reviews* assesses it as “mediocre” and “[i]nsubstantial” (1177), while Tim Wadham of *School Library Journal* remarks, “[t]his story may hold some appeal for ravenous fantasy readers, but others can and should pass it by” (156). By contrast, Gillian Lathey of the British magazine *School Librarian* calls L’Homme’s first volume “a thrilling yarn” (24). Lathey is echoed by Heather Pittman in *Voice of Youth Advocates*, who describes *Qadehar the Sorcerer* as “creatively solid” (505). *Publishers Weekly* is more circumspect, calling *Qadehar* “vague but effective” and “strong enough to make the sequel worth a look” (66).

One result of these issues of audience and reception is that even as L’Homme’s series opens onto the alternative world spaces of *Ys*, *The Certain World* and *The Uncertain World*, the spaces in which the trilogy texts are read, discussed, and compared remains relatively restricted to brief reviews in trade periodicals. Nor is it incidental that this divide occurs at a time when the language of space and geography are increasingly prevalent in discussions of literature. Examining the recent explosion of spatial metaphors in literary criticism, Jean-Marie Grassin notes that literature is frequently referred to as a space (*espace*), a “field”

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<sup>12</sup> Translation: “not works but common places” and “presents real qualities that make it quite lovable.”

(*champ*) with borders (*frontières*), edges (*lisières*), roads (*chemins*) and byways (viii).<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, the scholarly interest in what Grassin calls the art of interpreting imaginary spaces—“l’art d’interpréter les espaces imaginaires” (xiii)—reflects how space as a construct has been seized upon by critics, scholars and theorists. Spatially-oriented titles proliferate in studies of French children’s and young adult literature, among them Isabelle’s Nières-Chevrel’s *Littérature de Jeunesse, Incertaines Frontières* (2005), Jean Foucault and Mugurș Constantinescu’s collection, *Du Local à L’Universel: Espaces Imaginaires et Identités dans la littérature d’enfance* (2007).<sup>14</sup> Scholars who wish to study young adult French fantasy thus find themselves faced with a paradox: scholarly interest in space as a theoretical construct has not coincided with equal attention to the alternative world spaces so prevalent in young adult fantasy texts themselves. At the same time, the spatial register of these titles reflects a certain level of cultural anxiety about the porous nature of literary borders and issues of literary identity in an increasingly Anglicized marketplace.<sup>15</sup>

That French literature for children and adolescents has found itself particularly invisible<sup>16</sup> comes as no surprise to Michel Defourny, who writes that young adult literature

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<sup>13</sup> In using the word, field, Grassin is speaking uniquely in terms of imagery. His use of the word field differs from that of Pierre Bourdieu, whose definition of “field” I quote at length in the Introduction.

<sup>14</sup> See also Catherine Lapoutre’s article, “Les livres pour enfants: une espace de liberté” in *La revue des livres pour enfants* 161 (1995): 56-59 and Michel Defourny’s article, “Célébration des espaces intermédiaires et hybrides” *Lecture Jeune* 91 (1999): 7-10.

<sup>15</sup> In her autobiography, *Auteur-Jeunesse : Pourquoi le suis-je devenue; Pourquoi le suis-je restée* (Paris: Sorbier, 2003), French youth author Marie-Aude Murail relates an incident with an editor: “Nous étions bien sûr en pleine harrypotterisation. Le propos de l’éditrice était clair: les auteurs français n’étaient pas capables d’une riposte originale....Tout ce que nous pouvions faire, c’était nous aligner sur le modèle pour espérer un jour de le dépasser” (123)./Translation: “We were in the midst of full harrypotterization. The editor’s proposal was clear: French authors were not capable of an original riposte....All we could do was to align ourselves with the model and hope one day to exceed it.”

<sup>16</sup> For a critique of the state French scholarship in children’s and young adult literature and its relative absence in relation to English-language children’s literature, see Jean Perrot’s interview in *La revue des livres pour enfants* 183 (1998): 43-50 in which he comments: “il y a beaucoup d’étrangers, à part quelques francophiles, qui ignorent tout de notre littérature de jeunesse contemporaine....nous avons des auteurs de grandes qualité

narrativizes its own spatial indeterminacy: “[l]a littérature de jeunesse, depuis ses origines, n’a cessé d’explorer des espaces intermédiaires ou situés marges...” (9).<sup>17</sup> In L’Homme’s series, as with fantasy in general, marvelous and uncertain fictional spaces compel us to confront the spaces in which we live once the last page is turned. In the young adult fantasy narrative, fictional spaces function as a means of identifying the need for social and political change in our own world. If fantasy teases us with the promise of escape from our humdrum, workaday lives, it nevertheless inverts its own proposition by forcing us to think about the ways in which fictional spaces mirror our own. In *La Fantasy: Que sais-je?* (2005), Jacques Baudou contends that French approaches to young adult fantasy are less concerned with repeating the codes of their Anglophone predecessors than with questioning how those codes govern readers’ expectations. Affirming the work of French fantasy writers, Baudou writes that:

[l]es meilleurs œuvres de fantasy française sont le plus souvent des romans qui n’appartiennent pas au noyau central du genre, mais à ses marges. Elles opèrent une subversion de ses codes, pratiquent le métissage et apparaissent comme des objets littéraires d’une grande originalité (qui n’ont pas d’équivalents dans la fantasy anglo-saxonne). (76)<sup>18</sup>

As noted in the introduction, Derrida remarks in *The Law of Genre* that to speak of literature is to speak of hybridity, in the sense that all literatures borrow, subvert, and play upon the

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pour lesquels il manque une diffusion internationale et c’est peut-être dû à l’absence de promotion par la recherche ou la critique” (48). See also Perrot’s *Mondialisation et littérature de jeunesse* (Paris: Électre, 2008): 9-17 for an exposition of the state of international children’s literature in light of globalization.

<sup>17</sup> Translation: “Since its origins, literature for young people has never ceased exploring those intermediate spaces situated at the margins...” (9).

<sup>18</sup> Translation: “The best works of French fantasy are most often the novels that do not belong to the central core of the genre, but to its margins. They subvert its codes, practice cross-breeding, and appear as literary objects of a great originality (that have no equivalents in Anglo-Saxon fantasy).” See also Denis Labbé’s contention in “De l’intertextualité de la fantasy française” *Iris* 24 (2003) 303-311 that French approaches to fantasy can be seen as “jouant avec les règles établies par la littérature anglo-saxonne, pour mieux les transcender en y apportant des références différentes, renouant avec les voies anciennes, explorant des sentes nouvelles” (304)./ Translation: “playing with the established rules of Anglo-Saxon literature in order to better transcend it by bringing to it different references, resuming old ties and establishing new paths.”

narrative forms, techniques, and modes of their predecessors. By using the term *métissage* (cross-breeding), a term with strong connotations in the field of post-colonial studies, Baudou is emphasizing the ways in which French fantasy both adheres to and departs from Anglophone versions of young adult fantasy.

### **The Worlds of *The Book of the Stars***

This chapter follows Baudou's argument and creates a space in which to discuss how the alternative spaces in L'Homme's series echo, critique and play on the worlds of their fantasy predecessors. In effect, the similarities between Rowling's cycle and L'Homme's trilogy are frequently invoked, but have yet to be closely explored. In addition to providing a necessary space for such an exploration, this chapter also examines the differing visions of space in the three alternate universes that comprise L'Homme's trilogy. If L'Homme's Pays d'Ys suggests space as an idyllic rapport between humans and their environs, his depictions of the real and the uncertain worlds (Le Monde Certain and Le Monde Incertain) serve as spaces in which otherness, difference and alterity are at once celebrated and problematized. Even as L'Homme's narrative engages readers in reflections on environmental ethics and appreciation of difference and diversity, it continues to perpetuate the same ideological impulses it critiques, suggesting that the subversive qualities of young adult literature are perhaps more difficult to extricate than Baudou assumes or than Allison Lurie contended in her ground-breaking celebration of their transgressive ethics in *Don't Tell The Grown-Ups* (1990).<sup>19</sup>

The three volumes of L'Homme's *Le Livre des Étoiles*—*Qadeher le Sorcier*, *Le Seigneur Sha* and *Le Visage de L'Ombre*— follow the story of Guillemot de Troïl, a twelve-

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<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of Lurie, see the Introduction.

year-old boy who lives in a fabulous realm called Le Pays d'Ys. The country's name derives from the mythical lost city of Ys in Breton legend, said to have been swallowed by the Atlantic Ocean in the time the Celts.<sup>20</sup> Like J. M. Barrie's Neverland that is "always more or less an island" (7), L'Homme's Pays d'Ys is also an island connected via a magical portal to le Monde Certain (or Certain World) of 21<sup>st</sup>-century France. Like the spells that render Hogwarts, Hogsmeade and other wizarding locales invisible to muggles in the *Harry Potter* books, Ys is also invisible to the Certain World's inhabitants. This same magical door also permits access to a mysterious land known as le Monde Incertain. As its name suggests, this world is dangerous and unknown space, peopled with strange tribes who live on rafts in dangerous seas (La Mer des Brûlures) while others survive in its voracious deserts (Le Désert Vorace) and impenetrable forests (L'Irtych Violet), and who are a constant source of fascination and fright for Guillemot and his friends. More importantly, this world is also the world of L'Ombre (the Shadow), L'Homme's personification of evil, who threatens to consume life in all three worlds. In the tradition of Tolkien's Mordor, the Shadow commands the usual band of evil brigands, monsters and malevolent priests. As is the case with Rowling's Voldemort, and Pullman's Metatron, the Shadow's lust for power forms a major narrative strand and necessitates Guillemot's quest in a Manichean struggle. Like Rowling's Voldemort whose life is intricately tied to Harry's, L'Ombre seeks out Guillemot in each volume of the trilogy in an effort to use the boy's magical forces for evil.

Readers already familiar with the series of Rowling and Tolkien will recognize L'Homme's deliberate use of fantasy topoi, which illustrates Guillemette Tison's more general claim that French fantasy writers "se réfèrent explicitement à des prédécesseurs

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<sup>20</sup>For a telling of the Ys legend, see Christian Querré *Mystères et Légendes de Bretagne* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1995). Since the *matière de Bretagne* of Arthurian legend, Brittany has always occupied a 'separate' space in French folklore, a space belonging to and apart from regional and national traditions.

célèbres en littérature” (91).<sup>21</sup> L’Homme’s Shadow commands an army of monstrous Orks, whose name is borrowed from Sauron’s forces in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. The goblins that oversee the formidable Gringott’s Bank in the *Harry Potter* cycle are recast in L’Homme’s series as “les petits hommes de Virdu,” diminutive bankers of the Uncertain World who guard their precious stones with a zeal equal to that of Rowling’s goblins.<sup>22</sup> A shadowy figure known as Le Seigneur Sha initially inspires fears similar to Rowling’s *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Sirius Black. Like Sirius, Sha occupies an uncertain status as a criminal, but is later revealed not only as innocent but also as the father of one Guillemot’s friends. Commenting on the obvious similarities between L’Homme and Rowling, Fabrice Fauconnier writes, “Erik L’Homme ne s’en cache pas: c’est après avoir lu les trois premiers tomes d’Harry Potter que l’envie lui est venue d’écrire l’histoire de Guillemot” (par. 3).<sup>23</sup> Indeed, L’Homme’s interviews online and in print insist on his discovery of Rowling’s cycle as the creative point of departure for his own series. From this angle, then, L’Hommes *Book of the Stars* could be said to reinterpret the first three volumes of the Harry Potter books from a French perspective of an author who admires Rowling.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Translation: “refer explicitly to famous predecessors in literature.” See also Besson’s comment that “la fantasy en effet s’inscrit explicitement dans un ensemble de traditions narratives qu’elle réinvestit sans aucunement le dissimuler, car telle est justement son ambition” (“Les nouveaux aventuriers : l’exploration des mondes fantastiques” 132). Translation: “fantasy explicitly registers itself in the ensemble of narrative traditions that it openly reinvests because such is its ambition” (132).

<sup>22</sup> Guillemot tells his friends that these men are “les banquiers du Monde Incertain. Leur ville, Virdu, se trouve tout près des montagnes riches en pierres précieuses....les gens du Monde Incertain les craignent et les méprisent, et donc les laissent tranquils...” (*Qadehar* 137-138)./ Translation: “the bankers of the Uncertain World. Their town, Virdu, is located near mountains rich in precious stones...the people of the Uncertain World fear and mistrust them and leave them alone.”

<sup>23</sup> Translation: “Erik L’Homme holds nothing back: it was after having read the first three volumes of Harry Potter that the desire to write Guillemot’s story came to him.”

<sup>24</sup> It is however, necessary to remember that French perspectives on Rowling are as divergent as they are in Britain and the United States.

Given these similarities, it is not surprising that L'Homme's setting also resembles Rowling's. The Sorcerer's Guild at Gifdu where Guillemot studies magic is as labyrinthine as Hogwarts. Apprentice sorcerers like Guillemot must make use the "pierres bavardes" ("talking stones") in order to negotiate the Gifdu monastery's serpentine corridors, just as Harry and his classmates must keep up with changing passwords and spells that control access to the dormitories, secret rooms and passages at Hogwarts.<sup>25</sup> The Three Broomsticks and The Hog's Head, where Rowling's protagonists sip butterbeer also find a corollary in L'Homme's La Taverne du Vieux Qui Louche, complete with honey-flavored beer referred to as corma (*Visage* 28).

The most noticeable similarity between L'Homme's series and Rowling's is their use of the unlikely boy-hero in Guillemot and Harry. L'Homme's Guillemot resembles Harry with his "cheveux toujours en bataille" (*Qadehar* 12)<sup>26</sup> and slight physical appearance, which makes him the target of school bullies and his brash uncle Urien's wrath. Urien treats Guillemot as a good-for-nothing "bon à rien" (*Qadehar* 46) much the same way that Harry's Uncle Dursley refers to his own nephew as an "abnormality" and "very disturbed" (*Chamber* 9, 20). In the face of their uncles' abuse, both boys long for absent and unknown fathers, but receive help from surrogate mentors, Dumbledore and Qadehar, who recognize their talents as wizards and sorcerers. Both Harry and Guillemot stand up for their weaker schoolmates (*Sorcerer* 148; *Qadehar* 12) and both enjoy fooling their own tormentors with false spells of nonsense words (*Chamber* 9; *Qadehar* 63).

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<sup>25</sup> See the description of Hogwarts in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*: "There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide sweeping ones; narrow rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with vanishing step halfway up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were the doors that wouldn't open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the right place, and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending" (131-132).

<sup>26</sup> Translation: "disordered hair."

In addition to their status as orphans searching for fathers, both Guillemot and Harry recognize that their special talents make them uniquely responsible for others. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry attempts to save the life of his rival Cedric Diggory just as Guillemot travels to the Uncertain World to rescue the school bully when the latter is captured by the Shadow's mercenaries in his stead.<sup>27</sup> For both boys, acting on behalf of others and opposing evil require a subversive ethic that frequently put them at odds with adult authority. Both boys are fascinated by the forbidden spaces of Hogwarts and Gifdu, and use secret maps to acquire knowledge of these spaces that adults wish to keep from them. When Guillemot breaks out of the Gifdu monastery, his reasoning closely approximates Harry's own feelings of rage when he is confined to his room at the Dursley residence in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Harry wonders, "What was the good of magicking himself out of his room if Hogwarts would expel him for doing it?" (22). Guillemot is equally frustrated:

Le sentiment que tout le monde, autour de lui, lui mentait le remplait d'amertume. Il y avait maintenant deux façons possibles de réagir: faire ce qu'on lui disait et ce qu'on attendait de lui, comme un petit garçon bien sage; ou bien désobéir et suivre son intuition....On le traitait en captif ? Il réagirait en captif ! (126)<sup>28</sup>

As Philippe Clermont points out in his analysis of young adult French fantasy, transgression is a key component of the adolescent protagonists, who "se mettent en situation de mentir, de ne pas respecter les règles, ou de désobéir à la consigne d'un adulte..." (188),<sup>29</sup> which

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<sup>27</sup> See Guillemot's expression of his sense of responsibility "Agathe a été enlevée à ma place. C'est ma faute si elle est prisonnière dans le Monde Incertain. Il faut que je fasse quelque chose pour la sauver !" (*Qadehar* 133)./ Translation: "Agatha was taken in my place. It's my fault that she is a prisoner in the Uncertain World. I have to do something to save her."

<sup>28</sup> Translation: "The feeling that everyone was lying to him filled him with bitterness. There were two possible ways to react: either to do as he was told like a well-behaved little boy or to disobey and follow his intuition. So they were treating him as a captive? Well then, he would react as a captive."

<sup>29</sup> Translation: "put themselves in situations where they lie, disrespect the rules, or disobey adult orders."



echoes Labbé's thesis cited earlier that the pleasure of fantasy resides in the vicarious gratification of the desire to transgress taboos (305, 308).<sup>30</sup> Harry and Guillemot's refusal to play by the rules and their disdain for adults' limits and strictures provides readers of both series with a satisfying sense of subversion. Harry moves into the Chamber of Secrets just as Guillemot moves into the Uncertain World, despite their respective knowledge that neither place is safe, such is their curiosity to confront the dangers which the adults around them have attempted to disguise. For Harry and Guillemot, active transgression is especially necessary when adult authority figures prove to be profoundly unworthy of loyalty, as is the case with Rowling's Cornelius Fudge and Dolores Umbridge and L'Homme's Grand Mage Charlafaq, the human disguise taken by the Shadow.

In addition to their use of the rebellious boy-hero, both Rowling and L'Homme surround their protagonists with loyal friends. Like Ron, Hermione, and Harry who negotiate between Hogwarts and the ordinary London, L'Homme's adolescent protagonists are also aware that their own world is one of many. Guillemot's group of friends does, however, depart from Rowling's model by giving Guillemot sole status as an apprentice-sorcerer. Unlike Hermione and Ron who study magic at Hogwarts with Harry, Guillemot's friends are not capable of magic themselves, with the effect that Guillemot stands apart as the acknowledged leader and hero of the group.<sup>31</sup> Unlike Rowling, who makes magical talent a

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<sup>30</sup> See the Introduction, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Gontrand's exclamation: "Nous pouvons remercier Guillemot qui nous a tous tirés d'affaire !" (*Sha* 227)/ Translation: "We can all thank Guillemot who got us all out of the situation." Although readers of L'Homme's trilogy will note that Guillemot's friend Ambre is bewitched by the warrior-queen Kushumai in *Qadehar le Sorcier*, Ambre's powers remain hidden and unknown until the final volume. Their brief manifestation in *Le Visage de l'Ombre* is beyond Ambre's control.

genealogical trait which allows her to construct a scathing critique of racism,<sup>32</sup> magical ability in Ys is not a function of inherited or biological traits. Guillemot's powers are discovered by accident when the boy loses consciousness and levitates in the presence of Qadehar's sudden appearance.<sup>33</sup> In Ys, magic is recognized as one talent among many an adolescent may manifest. For instance, Guillemot's friend Gontrand is recognized as a talented musician while Romaric's skills as a horseback rider, soldier and fighter quickly set him apart to be trained as an apprentice knight.

### **The Realm of Ys: The Best of Both Worlds**

Beyond its obvious connections to the *Harry Potter* series noted above, Guillemot's group of friends (composed primarily of the robust Romaric, the tomboy Ambre, the flirtatious Coralie and the musician Gontrand) is frequently compared to the popular French translations of British author Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven* series.<sup>34</sup>

L'Homme strengthens this connection in *Le Seigneur Sha*, referring explicitly to the expanded group as "La bande des sept" (239), a phrase which approximates *Le Clan des Sept*, the French title given to Blyton's *Secret Seven*. In Clermont's analysis, this emphasis on the group effort rather than the individual triumph underscores the hero's human

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<sup>32</sup> The Wizarding world in Rowling's series is divided into purebloods (children with magical talents descended from magical parents), Muggle-borns (children descended from mixed marriages between magicians and non-magical Muggles, who are derogatively referred to as "mud-bloods"), Squibs (those descended from magical parents but who possess no magical powers at all) and Muggles (non-magical humans without knowledge of the existence of the wizarding world).

<sup>33</sup> See *Qadehar le Sorcier*, chapters 4-5.

<sup>34</sup> In his interview with Laure Ricote, L'Homme affirms that French translations of Blyton's series were part of his childhood reading (par. 9). Fabrice Fauconnier's online review of *Qadehar le Sorcier* also points to the *esprit de corps* that animates L'Homme's five protagonists as similar to Blyton's: "L'aventure de nos cinq héros n'est pas non plus sans rappeler les épopées du *Club des Cinq* ou du *Clan des Sept*, chers à notre enfance" (par. 4). / Translation: "The adventure of our five heroes also reminds one of the epics of the *Famous Five* or *Secret Seven* dear to our own childhoods." Published in Great Britain in 1942 and 1949, Blyton's series *The Famous Five* and *The Secret Seven* were translated into French as *Le Club des Cinq* and *Le Clan des Sept* and published by Hachette's Bibliothèque Rose.

dependence on others to accomplish his quest (188-189). Despite their heroes' magical powers (such as Harry's uncanny ability to speak Parsletongue and Guillemot's ability to control his inner 'wave' or 'force'), Rowling and L'Homme suggest that both boys' quests are equally dependent on the support of a circle of loyal friends. Destiny cannot be achieved in a vacuum. While the absence of magical talent among Guillemot's friends is never fully explained, the implicit suggestion is that ordinary qualities like humor (Bertrand), wit (Coralie), courage (Amber), creativity (Gontrand) and strength (Romaric)—qualities which adolescent readers can identify and possess—are more important than magical or supernatural gifts.

While these similarities noted thus far are striking, it would be erroneous to suggest that L'Homme's narrative is a mere derivative of Rowling's. Indeed, it is a mark of fantasy's popularity that the education of the young wizard is a commonplace in children's and young adult literature as is evidenced by Diana Wynne Jones *Chrestomanci* books and Diane Duane's *Young Wizards* series. It is also important to bear in mind that L'Homme's use of parallel worlds differs from Rowling's. L'Homme's series posits three separate worlds between which his characters travel. As is the case with Lyra's Oxford in Pullman's *The Golden Compass*, the first volume of L'Homme's trilogy also introduces readers to a world that closely approximates their own but with significant differences. In *Qadehar le Sorcier*, Guillemot and his four friends attend a seemingly ordinary middle school, complete with the requisite homework, boredom and bullies. Like French young people, they snack on nutella, read the latest *bandes-dessinées* or comic books, go to the movies and use laptop computers, forcing the reader to wonder if Ys does indeed differ from the world outside the text.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The effect of this mixing echoes Doreen Maitre's earlier description of fantasy in *Literature and Possible Worlds* (1983). Writing well before the take-off of fantasy in the literary and popular culture, Maitre noted that

L'Homme's narrative however complicates these initial assumptions of postmodernity by creating a space that retains the vestiges and practices of its Celtic past. The presence of valiant knights, chateaux-forts, monasteries, knowledgeable wizard-sorcerers, and diminutive, mischievous korrigans from Breton folklore situate the world space of Ys as a marvelous realm not unlike the worlds of Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* or those in Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising*. This sense of the medieval is supported by the descriptive reminder "Moyen-Age" (*Qadehar* 27, *Sha* 252). Readers of L'Homme's series are confronted with characters who can simultaneously discuss the Cannes Film Festival and Ferraris but who also wonder how the inhabitants of the Certain World can get along without magic (*Qadehar* 104)—a concern which echoes similar ones of Rowling's character, Arthur Weasley. Like the cauldrons, quills, parchments and potions that proliferate in *Harry Potter*, L'Homme's mélange of past and present creates a playful atmosphere in which twenty-first century innovations like cinema, television and radio exist side-by-side with the medieval trappings common to adventure-quest narratives.<sup>36</sup>

If L'Homme's juxtaposition of the past and present creates a sense of cultural and temporal hybridity, Doreen Maitre argues that one effect of fantastic hybridity "is to bring home to us that the actual world also operates at the limits of intelligibility..." (75). In this sense, reading fantasy reminds us that our knowledge of the world is limited. As Rowling's Luna Lovegood reminds a skeptical Hermione in *Harry Potter and the Order of The Phoenix*, "you're so narrow-minded you need to have everything shoved under your nose..."

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"the reader seeks to force the items and states of affaires of the actual world onto the fantasy world, in order to make sense of it; but at the same time the fantasy world is forcing *its* subject matter on the actual world, filtering it and thus subtly changing it..." (73; ital. orig.).

<sup>36</sup> In its review of *Qadehar the Sorcerer*, *Publisher's Weekly* notes that Ys "seems to be a composite of several different stages of history: medieval pageantry sits side by side with kids playing computer games; windmills provide the electricity for laptops; sorcerers talk of chaos theory" (66).

(345). The visible is only one way of knowing. Likewise, Guillemot's initiation into astronomy and sorcery will require him to acquaint himself with the invisible links and attachments ("liens invisibles" [*Qadehar* 67]) in the natural world.

In addition to its position as a magical universe, the combination of the technological with the idealized pastoral in Ys allows L'Homme to engage his readers in a reflection on ecological responsibility. The reader of *Qadehar le Sorcier* learns for example that "[l]es véhicules à moteur n'avaient pas d'usage à Ys. D'ailleurs, rien de ce qui était vraiment polluant n'était autorisé" (22)<sup>37</sup> and that the islands' inhabitants harness wind and underground currents for electricity (*Qadehar* 22). French readers also recognize that Guillemot's own name echoes that of a bird population from the Breton region of Finistère endangered by the 1999 Erika tanker oil spill.<sup>38</sup> Not surprisingly, humankind's relationship to wildlife in Ys is also one of mutual tolerance:

Au Pays d'Ys, il n'avait pas ces forêts domestiquées par les hommes comme il y en a tant dans le Monde Certain. Elles étaient toutes sauvages, mystérieuses, et peuplées de créatures aussi nombreuses qu'étranges, et l'homme qui s'y aventurait n'était qu'une de ces créatures parmi tant d'autres. Il y avait du respect et même une certaine complicité entre la nature et les habitants du Pays d'Ys. C'était comme un pacte ancien, conclu si loin dans le temps qu'une mémoire humaine ne pouvait s'en souvenir. (*Qadehar* 162-163)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Translation: "Motorized vehicles were not used in Ys. Besides nothing really polluting was allowed."

<sup>38</sup> When asked about the avian derivation his hero's name, L'Homme explains, "À l'époque où je cherchais un nom pour mon héros, le pétrolier Erika faisait naufrage au large des côtes bretonnes, provoquant une immense catastrophe écologique. Parmi les oiseaux les plus touchés par cette monstrueuse marée noire figurait le Guillemot de Troïl. Il m'a alors semblé naturel de le mettre à l'abri de la folie des hommes, dans mon Pays d'Ys et de donner son nom, comme un hommage, à mon Apprenti Sorcier." (par. 6). / Translation: "At the time when I was searching for a name for my hero, the oil-tanker Erika wrecked on the Breton coasts, provoking an immense ecological catastrophe. Among the birds most affected by this monstrous black tide was the Guillemot de Troïl. It seemed natural to me to shelter him from the madness of men in my realm of Ys and to give his name, in homage to my Apprentice-Sorcerer."

<sup>39</sup> Translation: "Ys had none of the domesticated forests as there were so many of in the Certain World. Forests in Ys were wild, mysterious and populated with creatures both numerous and strange, and the man that ventured forth was only one creature among many others. There was respect and even a sort of complicity between nature and the inhabitants of Ys. It was like an ancient pact, drawn up so long ago that human memory could not remember it."

By opposing domestication of nature in the Certain World with its manicured lawns and parks to the wilds of Ys, L’Homme’s narrative suggests how far the former has fallen. The ancient pact of Ys acknowledges the profound and long-standing difference between “savage” animals and humans. Yet whereas the word “savage” often indicates a colonizing stance towards a so-called lesser “Other,” L’Homme rewrites wildness in Ys as a sign of mutual acceptance. This regard between humans and animals is based on acknowledgement of the other’s diversity (“aussi nombreuses qu’étranges”/ “as numerous as strange”; “une créature parmi d’autres”/ “one creature among many”) and prepares L’Homme’s characters and readers for the similar strangeness they will encounter in the Uncertain World.

This respectful relationship between humans and their environment establishes Ys as an idealized space that L’Homme himself has characterized as “le monde dans lequel j’aurais aimé vivre.”<sup>40</sup> As fictional wish-fulfillment, Ys promotes a fantasy of idyllic coexistence that simultaneously critiques the comparative blandness of the Certain World. In *Le Seigneur Sha*, L’Homme returns to the “ancient pact” mentioned above in order to highlight how violence against the other in the Certain World has doomed its inhabitants to spiritual and moral loneliness:

C’était avant que les hommes du monde réel, oubliant le Pacte Ancien, traquent et anéantissent ceux qui ne leur rassemblaient pas; avant qu’ils désenchangent le monde dans lequel ils vivaient, pour finalement s’y retrouver seuls. (184)<sup>41</sup>

Like the absence of “memory and wakefulness” (AS 224) that dooms conscious life in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, the act of forgetting in *Le Livre des Étoiles* leads to

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<sup>40</sup> Translation: “the world in which I would have liked to live.” See L’Homme’s interview with Laure Ricote.

<sup>41</sup> Translation: “That was before the men of the real world, forgetting the ancient pact, stalked and annihilated those who did not resemble them, before they disenchanted the world in which they lived in order to find themselves alone.”

annihilation of the marvelous. Enchantment and mystery cannot coexist with the desire for dominance and certainty because intolerance of difference leads to self-defeating isolation. As a negation or inversion of the passage from *Qadehar le Sorcier* cited earlier, this one establishes irrevocable loss as a consequence of insularity and underscores the necessity of accepting the “strange” and the unknown as relative markers, both as a survival strategy and as ethical practice.

The emphasis on ecological consciousness foregrounds the practice of magic in Ys as the opening of one’s self to the elemental forces in the natural world. Like Ys and the world of Pullman’s *mulefa*, fantastic multiverses (Narnia, Middle Earth, Earthsea, Prydain) all have rules involving the stewardship of the natural world that inform protagonists’ apprenticeships and initiatory quests. In the fantastic multiverse, magic functions to encourage the development of the reader’s curiosity and discovery of the natural world. In Stéphane Manfrédo’s analysis, magic in young adult fantasy is closely allied with the study of nature. Magic he explains, “se développe en harmonie avec la nature. À la base de la structure de l’univers, elle est un objet de connaissance et de maîtrise du monde” (“Du merveilleux” 8).<sup>42</sup> Both Rowling and L’Homme suggest that the study of nature is its own form of magic: learning about the plants and animals establishes connection and responsibility that prevents the consumption of natural resources. Courses at Hogwarts include herbology, care of magical creatures and potions, classes that closely approximate biology, veterinary studies and chemistry. Similarly, Guillemot assiduously studies plant life, astronomy and geography. Qadehar instructs Guillemot that the magical process begins with learning a new way to observe his surroundings: “le premier effort pour accéder à la compréhension

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<sup>42</sup> Translation: “develops in harmony with nature. As the foundation of the universe, it is at once a field of study and a way to master the world.”

magique du monde, c'est de le regarder différemment" (*Qadehar* 67).<sup>43</sup> The ability to adjust one's vision indicates the mental and emotional growth necessary for the protagonists' initiatory quests. Practicing subtlety—seeing that which is not immediately apparent—is a step towards maturity and away from literal or dualistic interpretations of childhood. Moreover, opening one's eyes to the multiplicity of world spaces also implies the recognition that there are as many ways of living in one's own world as there are worlds in the text. Accepting the unseen and the unknown is a necessary point of departure for the exploration of fictional worlds as well as the multiple spaces and places within the reader's own world.

As a result of his initiation into the unseen, the horizons of Guillemot's former existence, the familiar spaces of school and home, expand to become a study of cosmological proportions, confirming Constantinescu's view that "dans le récit merveilleux moderne, l'espace domestique côtoie naturellement l'espace cosmique..." (159).<sup>44</sup> Like Lyra's quest to discover the true nature of Dust in *His Dark Materials*, Guillemot's deepening knowledge of the cosmos promotes connection and responsibility to the spaces through which he moves. Guillemot recognizes that his magical talents make him uniquely responsible for his own world of Ys as well as for the inhabitants of the Uncertain World. His sense of accountability mirrors Lyra and Will's sacrifice for the continued existence of all worlds at the end of *The Amber Spyglass* as well as Harry's expanding sense of duty to the Wizarding world as well as to the ordinary Muggles.<sup>45</sup> As these protagonists learn about the spaces to

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<sup>43</sup> Translation: "To arrive at a magical understanding of the world, one must begin by looking at it differently."

<sup>44</sup> Translation: "In the modern marvelous narrative, domestic space naturally exists side by side with cosmic space."

<sup>45</sup> See for example Harry's disgust at the Death Eaters' treatment of Muggles in chapter nine in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. See also Lyra's exclamation, "Oh we *can't*, Will!... We can't do that to people—not let other Specters out, not now we've seen what they do!" (AS 487 ital. orig.)



which they have extraordinary access, these multiverses exert a price for their knowledge: protagonists can no longer think locally or personally; they are instead responsible for the well-being and the restoration of the new spaces through which they move.

Guillemot learns that stars' constellations form the outlines of a magical alphabet of shapes known as *graphèmes*, which the reader recognizes as bearing the same names and shapes of ancient runes of Norse mythology. Guillemot learns that calling the names of these runic characters (ingwaz, eiwaz, fehu, etc.) and adopting physical postures that mimic their shapes give him the power to enter into contact with the natural world. The five elements of water, air, earth, fire and flesh (which is defined as “les hommes, les plantes, les animaux... Tout ce qui respire” [*Qadehar* 67]<sup>46</sup>) constitute a system of forces linked together in an invisible spider-like web called the *Wyrð*. *Qadehar*, for example, compares the *Wyrð* to “une gigantesque toile d’araignée dont les fils sont attachés à tout ce qui existe” (*Sha* 49),<sup>47</sup> a not-so-subtle hint at the inter-connectedness of all living things. In the same vein, *Qadehar*'s instructions to Guillemot—“un seul petit acte de rien du tout peut avoir des répercussions énormes” (*Qadehar* 68)<sup>48</sup>—parallels L'Homme's own interest in ecological consciousness-raising.<sup>49</sup> As Christian Grenier argues, the multiple worlds addressed by young adult fantasy constitute “une réflexion sur la responsabilité du moindre de nos actes et

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<sup>46</sup> Translation: “men, plants, animals...All that breathes.”

<sup>47</sup> Translation: “like a giant spider's web whose threads are connected to all that exists.”

<sup>48</sup> Translation: “even the smallest, tiniest act can have enormous repercussions.”

<sup>49</sup> In his interview with Nathalie LaCube, L'Homme highlights the ecological message in his *roman à thèse*: “Les enfants le sentent, leur intérêt pour la nature et pour l'écologie leur fait savoir qu'un seul petit geste peut avoir des répercussions énormes.”/ Translation: “Children feel it, their interest in nature and ecology lets them know that even the smallest act can have enormous repercussions.” L'Homme was also the director of the youth magazine, *Jeunes pour la nature*.

sur les mécanismes de l'histoire" (60).<sup>50</sup> Just as preserving the pastoral Shire is the goal of Tolkien's hobbits, and restoring Narnia from winter is the task of C.S. Lewis' Pevensie children, Guillemot also finds that his task is not only to vanquish the darkness and evil the Shadow represents, but to maintain the equilibrium of nature and energy in Ys. Qadehar's tutelage of Guillemot locates *Le Livre des Étoiles* within the initiatory traditions of the *roman d'apprentissage*, with the attendant expectation that the reader's education into matters ecological will follow from Guillemot's own.

Moreover, the deliberate linguistic register of Qadehar's terms (graphemes, word), suggests that learning and language are each magical endeavors. The search for the missing Book of the Stars that forms one the trilogy's plotlines is a quest to recover a secret and powerful Ur-text. This emphasis on books continues with the inclusion of Guillemot's study notes at the end of the first two volumes. This para-textual access to the runic letters and poses Guillemot learns and his maps of Ys and the Uncertain World provide a sort of runic glossary and tutorial for the reader that is reminiscent of Rowling's publications of the books that her own characters read.<sup>51</sup> Such texts extend the 'life' of the series and are designed to strengthen the connection between readers and the protagonists with whom they identify. In addition, Guillemot's ability to access the *Wyrd* closely parallels Ewilan's powers of design ("dessin") and Lyra's ability to interpret the relationships between the symbols of her alethiometer. For Lyra, Harry, Guillemot and Ewilan, magic is at once a means of expression through which they learn to interact with the world, as well as a psychoanalytic metaphor for the adolescent's discovery of his or her own inner power. Because magic

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<sup>50</sup> Translation: "a reflection on the responsibility of the least of our actions and on the mechanisms of history."

<sup>51</sup> See Rowling's *Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2008), which figures in *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, as well as *Quidditch Through The Ages* (2001) and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001).

requires prudence and humility as Qadehar so often repeats to Guillemot,<sup>52</sup> fantasy protagonists learn that the problems they encounter in the multiverses through which they travel cannot be resolved through spells alone. Moving between and among heterotopias has less to do with deploying power than with encountering difference without seeking to dominate it.

Accessing such power requires an inner state of mystical contemplation that recalls Lyra's readings of the alethiometer.<sup>53</sup> Guillemot learns that he must discover Graphèmes that compose the Wyrd through a process of concentrated reflection and Zen-like meditation: "il faudra te les approprier, les redécouvrir toi-même par la méditation, créer avec eux une intimité dans ton coeur et dans ton esprit" (*Qadehar* 71).<sup>54</sup> This possibility of infinite, mystical and religious connection suggests that magic in Ys is a semi-sacred pursuit. In a move that recalls the wizard monastery Roke in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* books, L'Homme's Sorcerers spend their lives in monasteries where they also take vows of celibacy.<sup>55</sup> Although magic is not presented as a religion, its status as a protective force in Ys is reminiscent of Celtic tradition that informs much of Breton folklore. The series' link to

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<sup>52</sup> See Qadehar's injunction, "la prudence et l'humilité doivent être les maîtres mots du Sorcier !" (*Qadehar* 70). / Translation: "Prudence and humility are the guiding words of the Sorcerer."

<sup>53</sup> See Lyra's readings of the alethiometer in *The Golden Compass*: "She watched it calmly, content not to know at first, but to know that a meaning was coming, and then it became clear" (204); "the calm she needed to read the alethiometer... was so much a part of her now that the most complicated questions sorted themselves out into their constituent symbols as naturally as her muscles moved her limbs..." (327).

<sup>54</sup> Translation: "It will be necessary for you to appropriate them, to rediscover them through meditation, to create with them an intimacy in your heart and in your spirit."

<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting, however, that L'Homme's characters do not appear to take their celibacy especially seriously. Guillemot is the object of the competing attentions of Ambre and Agathe while his friend and sorcerer Bertram openly flirts and vies for the attention of Guillemot's female companions. Qadehar, whose status as Guillemot's father is not revealed until the final volume, has a brief liaison with the warrior queen Kushumai during an earlier quest in the Uncertain World. Kushumai is revealed as biological Guillemot's mother at the end of *Le Visage de l'Ombre*.

the mystical is underscored by Stonehenge-like structures on the cover illustrations of all three volumes. Together with the “ancient pact” discussed earlier, this emphasis on connection to the natural and the unseen situates Ys as a prelapsarian paradise.

### **Dystopia in the Certain World**

If Ys gestures towards space as quasi- or potential utopia, the Certain World of L’Homme’s trilogy is as dystopic as Will Parry’s Oxford in *The Subtle Knife*. Like Pullman’s version of the “real” Oxford, L’Homme’s Certain World occupies only a small part in the trilogy’s second volume. In *Le Seigneur Sha*, the depiction of the reader’s world becomes an opportunity to bemoan the ravages of urbanization in contrast to the idyllic Ys. While the nostalgic desire to return to an idealized, Arthurian past is a common trope of fantasy fiction,<sup>56</sup> L’Homme’s series is less concerned with gratifying such a longing than with asking readers to think about the ongoing abuse of natural resources in the spaces they inhabit. In this regard, L’Homme’s fictional multiverses serve the same function as Pullman and Bottero’s dystopias: the more the worlds within the text multiply, the more readers are reminded of the limits of their world and the necessary responsibility and choices those limited resources imply, which I discuss at greater length in the following chapter.

L’Homme’s critique is as earnest as Pullman’s in this regard, and like Pullman he distributes his ecology lesson between the characters and the narrative voice.<sup>57</sup> Guillemot’s friends’ knowledge of the Certain World from television and film prompts their exclamations

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<sup>56</sup> In this vein, see the work of Tolkien, Lewis, Alexander, Cooper and Ursula Le Guin. Critics of the Harry Potter series have also pointed out Rowling’s use of medieval apparatus in her construction of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade.

<sup>57</sup> In *The Subtle Knife*, Will remembers that in his own world, “people have been interfering with the atmosphere by putting chemicals in it...” (SK 273). See also Pullman’s description of the lava flows in the world of the *mulefa*: “It was quite unlike the brutal, rational way roads in Will’s world sliced through hillsides and leapt across valleys on bridges of concrete. This was part of the landscape, not an imposition on it” (AS 425).

such as, “ils sont en train de foutre leur monde en l’air” (*Qadehar* 104) and “je ne leur envie pas leur air pollué et leur eau qui pue la Javel ...” (104).<sup>58</sup> By displacing what the reader accepts as ‘normal’ and rendering worthy of disapproval, L’Homme’s narrative asks readers to consider their world from an outsider’s perspective, offering what Anne Besson calls “un nouveau reflet, une représentation autre, du monde vécu” (“Autres Mondes” 6).<sup>59</sup> More important for L’Homme’s purposes, however, is the rather pointed suggestion that the world outside the text needs rescuing no less as those worlds within it. Such is the pedagogy of the multi-world or heterotopic fantasy narrative: by presenting readers with multiple fictional alternatives to their own world, these texts explicitly encourage readers to see in fictional utopias all that is missing and in fictional dystopias, all that is or could become present in their own world.

The feelings of dis-ease regarding the Certain World are confirmed in the second volume when Guillemot’s arrival in modern-day France provokes a malaise similar to Lyra’s confusion when she enters Will’s Oxford in *The Subtle Knife*. Faced with a city full of noisy traffic and busy strangers, Guillemot is shocked to find himself in a world with which he is visually but not viscerally familiar:

Une fois sur le trottoir, il resta interdit. C’était donc ça des voitures ! Il en avait vu à la télé, bien sûr, mais il n’imaginait pas qu’elles pouvaient être aussi bruyantes, ni qu’elles sentaient aussi mauvais ! (*Sha* 253)<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Translations: “They are in the process of blowing their world up.” “I don’t envy them their polluted air or their water that stinks of bleach.”

<sup>59</sup> Translation: “A new reflection, an other representation of the lived world.”

<sup>60</sup> Translation: “Once on the sidewalk, he remained taken aback. So this is what cars were like! He’d seen them on the television, of course, but he never imagined that they could be as noisy or that they could smell so badly.”

Unlike Harry, who is delighted to find himself in the previously unknown world of Diagon Alley with Hagrid (*Sorter's* 71), Guillemot possesses prior knowledge of the Certain world's existence. Yet as is the case for most adolescents, his actual experience of this new world is far less glamorous than the version he knows from television and film. Guillemot's experience of the new and the 'other' is consonant with Bertrand Westphal's claim that "le contact des mondes provoque la défamiliarisation" (48).<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Guillemot's foray into the Certain World creates a sense of alienation: "Le goudron, qui remplaçait les pavés et qui sentait si fort. Les gens, qui le croisaient sans lui dire bonjour" (*Sha* 254).<sup>62</sup> Guillemot's surprise forces him to reconsider what he accepts as familiar. At the same time, his sense of isolation in the urban streetscape mirrors the similar separation of the Certain World, with its pungent tar, pollution, and bleach, from its environmental moorings.

### **The Uncertain World: Confronting the Other**

This sense of dystopic space culminates in the third volume, *Le Visage de L'Ombre*, which takes place primarily in the Uncertain World. The reader learns early in the trilogy that "[o]n ne connaissait du Monde Incertain que peu de chose, sinon qu'il était vaste et qu'il recelait bien des dangers" (*Qadehar* 14).<sup>63</sup> If this space is initially threatening because it is unknown, the passage that opens the final volume suggests a city ruled by a malevolent deity:

Ces hommes en tunique blanche, ces étudiants, ces Orks, ces prisonniers, avaient tous quelque chose en commun: la même peur les traversait chaque fois qu'ils portaient

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<sup>61</sup> Translation: "contact with other worlds provokes defamiliarization." The focus of Westphal's analysis is Ulysses' trip to the underworld in book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*, a voyage that has become a sort of Ur-text for subsequent discussions travels to fictional worlds.

<sup>62</sup> Translation: "The tar that replaced the cobblestones in Ys and that smelled so strongly. The people that passed by without even saying hello."

<sup>63</sup> Translation: "Very little was known about the Uncertain World except that it was vast and contained many dangers."

leurs regards sur la tour dominant de la cité ! La tour qui abritait le Grand Prêtre du culte de Bohor, le Maître des ténèbres... (11)<sup>64</sup>

Readers familiar with Tolkien's Mordor will recognize this brief sketch of a space overcome by forces of evil, which must be opposed (and ultimately overthrown) by Guillemot and the army his companions marshal. As an abject space, the tower dominating the city suggests a panoptic view of all that occurs below and establishes the danger of immediate incarceration of opponents of the Shadow. Like Pullman's Gobblers, who imprison children at Bolvangar, the priests of the Uncertain World institute an inquisition, kidnapping children, and imprisoning dissenters ("les prêtres avaient la conversion rapide et le sacrifice facile" [*Qadehar* 169]<sup>65</sup>). If Voldemort's Dark Mark gives wizards a literal face of their worst fears in *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire*, the Shadow also exerts control through similar means. As the warrior queen Kushumaï explains, "l'esprit et le cœur des gens qui sont eux-mêmes remplis de peurs...Il souffit de donner un visage à ces peurs" (*Visage* 223).<sup>66</sup> Yet as the examples of Ewilan, Lyra, Harry and Guillemot demonstrate, it is only by choosing to resist fear with action that evil can be vanquished.

It is in this threatening and dystopic space of the Uncertain World that L'Homme's adolescent protagonists come face to face with the uncertain 'others' whose ways of being in the world are very different from their own. Although the entire narrative is in French, the characters remind the reader that they are speaking *ska*, the language of the various tribes in the Uncertain World. In order to acquaint readers with this world, L'Homme uses the familiar device of a backfiring spell to distribute Guillemot's group of friends among the

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<sup>64</sup> Translation: "These men in white tunics, these students, these Orks, these prisoners all had something in common: the same fear passed over them when they gazed at the tower dominating the city! The tower that sheltered the Great Priest of the cult of Bohor, the Master of the shadows..."

<sup>65</sup> Translation: "The priests practiced rapid conversion and easy sacrifice."

<sup>66</sup> Translation: "the spirit and heart of the people are filled with fear...It suffices to give a face to that fear."

world's various peoples, who will later unite against the Shadow in *Le Visage de L'Ombre*.<sup>67</sup>

The protagonists' separation in the Uncertain World forces each adolescent to face the unfamiliar and 'other' without the benefit of Guillemot's magic as a *deus ex machina*. As

Constantinescu explains, the exploration of alternate world spaces in young adult literature:

constitue une initiation aux langages des choses et des êtres, une appréhension et une compréhension du sens du monde et une quête de soi. C'est en même temps, à travers un parcours d'espaces et de lieux variés et même antinomiques, une tentative de connaissance d'autrui et de sa différence. (161)<sup>68</sup>

For Coralie, the encounter with the sea tribe, le Peuple de la Mer, is an opportunity to learn that the Pays d'Ys is not as idyllic as she and her friends have assumed. When Coralie learns that the nomadic tribes live at sea to escape the monsters that haunt the coasts, she realizes that this is not a case of divine punishment as her new acquaintance supposes.<sup>69</sup> Rather, it is the fault of Ys' protectors who preferred to send the monsters to the Uncertain World "pour s'en débarrasser" (*Qadehar* 184).<sup>70</sup> The suggestion that the Uncertain World has served as a dumping ground for Ys' own undesirable inhabitants is further born out by the presence of Errant Wanderers, criminals from Ys condemned to a life of exile in Monde Incertain.<sup>71</sup> This gradual revelation of Ys' treatment of the 'other' destabilizes the previous notion of Ys as

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<sup>67</sup> In the penultimate volume of his Prydain Chronicles, *Taran Wanderer* (1967), Lloyd Alexander uses a similar plot device of the hero's travels to introduce readers to the multiple groups that will take part in the final battle against evil in *The High King* (1968).

<sup>68</sup> Translation: "constitutes an initiation to the languages of things and beings, an act of apprehending and understanding a sense of the world and a search for the self. It is at the same time, through its routing of varied and antonymic places and spaces, an attempt to become acquainted with others and their difference."

<sup>69</sup> Wal tells Coralie the story of le Peuple de la Mer's decision to live on water rather than land: "Un jour comme surgis de nulle part, les Gommions sont apparus. Peut-être envoyés par un mauvais dieu qui n'aimait pas notre peuple" (*Qadehar* 184). / Translation: "One day as if out of nowhere, the sea creatures appeared. Perhaps they were sent by an angry god who didn't like our people."

<sup>70</sup> Translation: "To dispose of them."

<sup>71</sup> The reader learns that "Les criminels d'Ys étaient envoyés en exil définitif dans le Monde Incertain pour devenir des Érrants" (*Sha* 249). / Translation: "Criminals from Ys were sent into perpetual exile in the Uncertain World to become Wanderers."



idealized space and hints that the protagonists' earlier criticisms of the Certain World have perhaps failed to account for the shortcomings of their own.

L'Homme repeats this moment of anagnorisis in *Le Visage de L'Ombre* when Coralie explains le Peuple de la Mer to Romaric. Romaric's guilty exclamation, "nous sommes responsables de ce malheur!" (*Visage* 119)<sup>72</sup> marks the boy's recognition of Ys' complicity in the dangers that beset the Uncertain World and that threaten to envelop Ys as well.

Romaric's sense of responsibility mirrors the awareness that L'Homme seeks to foster in his readers and echoes a more direct aside in *Le Seigneur Sha*, in which tolerance in Ys functions as a counterpoint for American colonists' dehumanizing treatment of Native Americans: "les habitants du Pays d'Ys... n'avaient jamais eu l'idée d'exterminer un peuple pour prendre sa place – contrairement aux colons d'Amérique, par exemple, vis-à-vis des Indiens"(183).<sup>73</sup>

Here, the intrusion of historical fact into the fantasy narrative reverses Todorov's original conception of *le fantastique*. For scholars like Todorov and Jackson, the fantastic marked the entry of the ambiguous and unlawful a world into reader accepted as "normal" in the mimetic sense. L'Homme's reversal, however, is no less jolting. Paradoxically, the reader who has accepted the fantastic normalcy of L'Homme's fictional heterotopias is jolted into realizing the connection between the spaces within the text and those outside it.

While fantasy has a strong tradition as social commentary, the ethos of fantasy is usually articulated within the context of the story itself, as is the case with Rowling's giants, centaurs, werewolves and house-elves. Characters like Hermione hold forth on unjust treatment of house-elves; Remus Lupin explains his status as a second-class citizen whose

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<sup>72</sup> Translation: "We are responsible for this misery."

<sup>73</sup> Translation: "The inhabitants of the Realm of Ys... had never had the idea of exterminating a people to take its place, contrary to the American colonists' treatment of the Indians for example."

mixed racial status bars him from finding work. The centaur Firenze teaches Harry's class that otherness is by no means a sign of inferiority by illustrating how little the students actually know: "[Firenze's] priority did not seem to be to teach them what he knew, but rather to impress upon them that nothing...was foolproof" (*Phoenix* 604).<sup>74</sup> In each of these cases, Rowling's characters speak for themselves. By contrast, L'Homme's insertion of the narrative voice and its fleeting reference to historical reality creates a moment of disjunction that catches the reader off guard. This direct reminder of colonization and extermination reminds readers of their similar responsibility for the shadows that haunt the worlds outside those of the text. In spite of this difference, both Rowling and L'Homme's pedagogical strategy remains the same. Both authors disguise and transform the dystopia in the reader's world within their fictional multiverses in order to prepare adolescent readers with the mental rehearsal necessary for the diversity of experience as well as the dystopias they will encounter in the spaces and places outside these texts.<sup>75</sup>

Yet Coralie's response to Romaric's crisis of conscience models the necessity of looking forward towards the future rather than into the past. The sea people, she tells Romaric chose to adapt to their new circumstances rather than bemoan their fate: "le destin...leur a montré deux chemins possibles! En choisissant le plus difficile, ils ont accepté de voir leur monde avec un œil neuf" (*Visage* 119).<sup>76</sup> The imperative to see the world with

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<sup>74</sup> See also Mary Malone's response to the *mulefa* in which Mary experiences "an adjustment being made in her mind, as the word *creatures* become the word *people*. These beings weren't human, but they were *people*, she told herself; it's not *them*, they're *us*" (*AS*123). For a full discussion, see chapter three.

<sup>75</sup> See Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage, 1976) and J. R. R. Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories" in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966): 1-84.

<sup>76</sup> Translation: "Destiny showed them two possible paths. By choosing the more difficult one, they accepted a way to see their world with new eyes."

new eyes is thus not limited to Apprentice Sorcerers like Guillemot who practice the art of seeing differently. Rather, it is no less necessary for his non-magical friends who must now negotiate the Uncertain World's language and terrain and befriend the people who live there. Nor is the lesson lost on L'Homme's reader, since Romaric's reaction suggests that the appropriate response to alterity is comprehension rather than pity: "il était stupéfait de voir son amie si bien comprendre des gens tellement différents..." (*Visage* 119).<sup>77</sup> In a larger sense, travel between heterotopias and multiverses moves characters and readers beyond naïve surprise because it opens up the possibility of a more nuanced and discerning appreciation of one's sense of space and place and those who occupy each.

In effect, the art of understanding and accepting difference forms a major subtext of the young adult fantasy narrative. Jane Yolen's earlier assertion cited in the introduction that fantasy broadens the reader's own horizons receives substantial support from those writers currently explicating fantasy for French readers. Writing in the journal *Lecture Jeune*, Stéphanie Nicot explains that these types of narratives force readers to "accepter un dépaysement souvent considérable, à admettre des façons de vivre et de penser radicalement autres que les siens" (24).<sup>78</sup> Similarly, in her analysis of the spaces in literature for children and young adults, Constantinescu defines spatial exploration as "une tentative de connaissance d'autrui et de sa différence" (161).<sup>79</sup> Fantastic multiverses and heterotopias

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<sup>77</sup> Translation: "He was amazed to see his friend understand such different people so well..."

<sup>78</sup> Translation: "to accept ways of living and thinking that are radically different from his own." Nicot's argument is supported by Lapautre, who writes that "[l]es livres pour enfants peuvent jouer un rôle subversif par le simple fait de présenter aux lecteurs une vision de ce qui est étranger: s'habituer très tôt à se mettre à la place de l'autre, c'est déjà commencer à accepter la diversité" (57)./Translation: "Books for children can play a subversive role by the simple fact of presenting readers with a vision of the unfamiliar: to be accustomed early on to put oneself in the other's place is to already begin to accept diversity."

<sup>79</sup> Translation: "An attempt at knowledge of others and their differences."

offer readers the opportunity to understand the “other,” the “new,” and the “different” as relative markers of their own limitations that they can (and should) overcome as they mature.

Despite this moment of intercultural understanding, L’Homme’s tripartite division of the ideal (Ys) the real (the Certain World), the unknown (the Uncertain World) is ideologically and socially problematic. It is this Uncertain World—not the Certain World—which L’Homme has called a reflection of our own, “un reflet du nôtre” (Ricote par. 7). He explains his creation of this fictional space as deriving from the spaces of the non-Western world:

les régions encore sauvages de notre planète où l’Occident perd ses repères et ses certitudes. Dans des contrées comme les montagnes d’Afghanistan ou l’archipel des Philippines, le monde devient vraiment incertain!<sup>80</sup>

While promoting acceptance of places unseen and those who inhabit them is a laudable goal and one that informs much of the writing for children and adolescents, L’Homme’s choice to equate Afghanistan and the Philippines with the *still savage* (“encore sauvages”) has a distinct and troubling colonial connotation. In his essay on diaspora and exile, John Durham Peters describes a similar exoticizing tendency of Western writers when he notes that “fascination with the other’s vitality practice[s] a kind of cosmopolitan chic—taking the allure but none of the pain” (34-35). Similarly, L’Homme’s equation of the Uncertain World (with its monsters and creatures) with the non-Western ‘Other’ promotes and romanticizes the very difference that his own narrative is otherwise at pains to combat.

That L’Homme chooses to depict the Uncertain World as a space for the non-human and the evil is also troubling. Consider for instance that in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Rowling devotes considerable focus to Tom Riddle’s transformation and rise to

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<sup>80</sup> Translation: “the still wild regions of our planet where the West loses its markers and certainties. In countries like the mountains of Afghanistan or the Philippine archipelago, the world really does become uncertain!”

power as Lord Voldemort. Rowling also gives readers a progressively nuanced view of the forces that shape the lives of her unsympathetic characters like Barty Crouch and Severus Snape. Conversely, L’Homme’s Shadow and the Orks, sea monsters, mercenaries and priests that serve him receive no such attention.<sup>81</sup> Such acceptance might yet occur with relative ease; heroic fantasy functions on the principle that darkness must be opposed and light restored. After all, Rowling does not demand that her readers empathize with Voldemort’s Death Eaters or with the Ministry of Magic’s campaign of misinformation against Harry. Neither does Pullman insist on sympathy of any sort for the murderous Father Gomez or the corrupt clerics of Geneva in *The Amber Spyglass*.

Yet L’Homme’s positioning of the free tribes in the Uncertain World as less than human gives one pause. The Northern Warriors of the Irtych Violet forest are characterized as more beast than human, “semblables à de grands fauves” (*Visage* 147),<sup>82</sup> while the troll-like korrigans are depicted as “incorrigibles” (190) and childish, jovial tricksters, incapable of rational thought: “les Korrigans, unis comme les doigts de la main lorsqu’il s’agissait de s’amuser, étaient incapables de s’entendre sur des sujets sérieux” (*Sha* 183)<sup>83</sup>—a phrase that sounds eerily similar to descriptions of previously colonized and enslaved populations. In

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<sup>81</sup> It is fair to remember, however, that L’Homme’s *Book of the Stars* was published prior to *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* and Rowling’s subsequent volumes. Rowling’s first three volumes leave much to be discovered. It is the facility with which L’Homme constructs his heroes’ opposition that I wish to highlight here. It is also worth noting that many critics of Pullman’s work have found his depiction of the Church one-sided at best. See for example Edward Higgins and Tom Johnson’s contention that “Pullman’s version of Christianity is a fairly common straw man...” (29) and “reductive” (28).

<sup>82</sup> Translation: “Similar to wild cats.”

<sup>83</sup> Translation: “the Korrigans, united like the fingers on a hand when it came to amusing themselves were incapable of agreeing on serious subjects.”

both cases, the narrative voice cues the reader to privilege the opinions of Guillemot and his friends rather than the point of view of the Uncertain World's inhabitants.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, Guillemot's discovery of les Hommes des Sables emphasizes Guillemot's stance as the knowledgeable, civilized, Western child, who solves the apparent "mystery" of the uncivilized "Other's" behavior:

Le rituel que les Hommes des Sables accomplissent dans le désert est celui qu'ils ont dû voir pour la dernière fois, quand ils se sont passés du Pays d'Ys au Monde Incertain ! Pour faire le chemin inverse, ils auraient dû modifier leur rituel en fonction de la position différente des étoiles.... (*Qadehar* 252)<sup>85</sup>

Guillemot recognizes the Sand Tribe's repetition of ancient magical gestures as well as the tribe's apparent ignorance of the act's significance. His knack for problem-solving "they should have" ("ils auraient dû"), occurring as it does at the end of the first volume, foreshadows Guillemot's later presentation of the Uncertain World to his classmates in the opening chapters of *Le Seigneur Sha*. Asked by his teacher to speak of his experience

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<sup>84</sup> Rowling's texts are not immune to this type of criticism, and it would be disingenuous to ignore the fact that the Harry Potter books have also been attacked for what critics have called their conservative re-affirmation of Eurocentrism, their misogynist depiction of Hermione Granger, and neo-imperial discourse that depicts characters like Winky the house-elf as a "the happy darky" (Mendlesohn 181) and Hagrid the half-giant who internalize and accept their secondary status rather than taking arms against it. This stance is perhaps best exemplified by Farah Mendlesohn's much-quoted article, "Crowning the King: Harry Potter and the Construction of Authority" in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2002) in which Mendlesohn writes that "if Harry learns anything, it is patronizing sympathy for [Hagrid and Dobby's] mistakes and simplicities" (163) while "Hermione is the bossy-know-it-all girl and thus doomed to be disliked by her peers. She can be liked only by association, or when she chooses to conform and will never be permitted to be anything other than a second in command" (174). Scholars who concur with Mendlesohn include Suman Gupta who writes that the books' "liberal and well-meaning and anti-fascist veneer ... is undercut under closer scrutiny by a deeper form of racism in the Magic world" (160). For additional readings of Rowling's response to alterity, see also GiselleLiza Anatol's article "The Fallen Empire: Exploring Ethnic Otherness in the World of Harry Potter" and Elaine Ostry's essay "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J. K. Rowling's Fairy Tales" and Julia Parks' analysis of class in her article "Class and Socioeconomic Identity in Harry Potter's England," all of which are located in Anatol's first edited volume, *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays* (Westport: Praeger, 2003). For a similar argument from a French perspective, see Pierre Bruno's "Une victoire du conservatisme et du sexisme? Harry Potter" in *La culture de l'enfance à l'heure de la mondialisation* (Paris: InPress, 2002) : 195-212.

<sup>85</sup> Translation: "The ritual the Sand Men accomplish in the desert is the one that they saw for the last time when they came from Ys to the Uncertain World! To get back again, they should have modified their ritual to correspond with the different position of the stars [in the Uncertain World]..."

“trvaeling abroad,” Guillemot excuses the peoples of the Uncertain World for their apparent lack of sophistication compared to the people of Ys:

Les gens qui y vivent sont assez rudes. Ils faut dire qu'ils n'ont pas le choix: ils doivent cohabiter avec des monstres commes les Orks ou les Gommons, mais aussi avec des hommes cruels. (*Sha* 42-43)<sup>86</sup>

Taken together, the facile association of the unknown other as lacking and backward creates a judgmental register which undercuts the narrative's earlier messages of tolerance and the moral value of diversity. Guillemot's privileged position as speaker and his opinion “they don't have a choice” risks a subtle denial of agency not unlike the one children's literature scholar Perry Nodelman describes when he writes via Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) that observation “makes the other wonderful at the expense of making it not like us—in essence, not quite human” (29). Guillemot's correctives and later dismissal of the peoples of the Uncertain World may not immediately register with younger readers. Moreover, his comments could equally be read as an illustration of his own immaturity. Nevertheless, the fact that no one corrects Guillemot is indicative of the ways in which colonizing attitudes continue to hold powerful sway in our own world.

As we read with Jane Yolen's *Touch Magic* from the introduction, fantasy narratives are frequently populated with non-human beings—Rowling for instance uses an array of mythological creatures such as centaurs, hippogriffes and elves. In this instance, it seems that the tone of L'Homme's characterizations appear more reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' depiction of the Calormenes and Dwarves in *The Last Battle* as a dark, smelly, unreasonable and hot-tempered (and hence, excluded from Lewis' Kingdom of Heaven) than of the more

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<sup>86</sup> Translation: “The people who live there are rather uncouth. It is necessary to say that they have no choice: They must cohabit with monsters like Orks and Gommons but also with cruel men.”

nuanced treatment one finds in Rowling's depictions of xenophobic reactions to Muggle-born magicians, giants and werewolves or in Pullman's angels, Gallivespians and *mulefa*.<sup>87</sup>

I do not wish to suggest that L'Homme's series should be dismissed on these grounds. Rather, I would simply like to point out the tension between tolerance for and judgment of the "Other" that exists in its pages. This disjunction is perhaps more constructively viewed as a reminder that we are beset by our own limitations even as we struggle to reach beyond them. As Nodelman himself observes, the paradox of speaking of the other cannot be escaped because "we always speak to our audience in an attempt to speak for it—to colonize it with our own perception of things, including itself" (34). Despite our best efforts to the contrary, our views and our positions shape the way in which we respond to those with whom we share the world. In this sense, reading—and reading specifically fantasy—is a necessary exercise in alterity. In *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990), Umberto Eco concurs, explaining that "[f]iction suggests that perhaps our view of the actual world is as imperfect as that of the fictional characters" (74). Imperfect characters live in imperfect worlds no less than imperfect writers and readers do. Speaking of another's difference is an ethically fraught undertaking because it denies that Other the very spaces which we claim for ourselves. Claiming difficulty, however, is no excuse. As Nodelman himself avers, awareness of our own faulty discourse and the exclusive nature of the spaces and places we inhabit means we simply have to work harder:

To be aware of the possible oppressiveness of our supposedly objective or even benevolent truths and assumptions ... does not mean that their potential oppressiveness will disappear. But we can at least work on it. (34)

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<sup>87</sup> For a critique of Lewis' Eurocentrism and misogyny in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, see John Goldthwaite's *A Natural History of Make-Believe* (Oxford: OUP, 1996).



If L'Homme's text allows readers to begin to reflect on the complexity such a task, then his work is certainly worth further consideration.

## **Conclusion**

L'Homme's *Book of the Stars* offers young adult fantasy readers the recognizable narrative of the sorcerer's apprentice as way to reflect upon what it means to learn, to make mistakes and to grow up. By setting his narrative in France, rather than Britain or the United States, L'Homme's explicit intertextual connections to Rowling's *Harry Potter* series invite readers to think about fantasy in a global context—an interest they share with readers around the world. Alternatively, the colonizing attitudes of L'Homme's protagonist and narrator can serve to help careful and reflective readers think critically about the abuses at work in their own world as well as their own attitudes towards people and cultures which have little in common with their own. Such is the task of the fantasy narrative: the hero returns in order that readers may embark on their own journeys. Readers who choose to do so experience the growth that occurs when they move from places of safety to spaces that require critical reflection, difficult choices, and the opportunity to see the world with new eyes.

## Chapter Three

### **“Nothing Like Pretend”: Difference, Disorder and Dystopia in The Multiple World Spaces of Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the multiple worlds in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy in light of Foucault’s concept of space as “other” and the space necessary for adolescent growth and development. I argue that Pullman’s deliberate return to the familiar fictional worlds of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Heinrich von Kleist’s “On Marionette Theater” contests Fredric Jameson’s view that the invention of new worlds and new stories are no longer possible. At issue is Pullman’s ethic of engagement that insists on deliberate choice and action. By examining the protagonists’ confrontation of difference and otherness and their necessary transgressions within the dystopic spaces of *His Dark Materials*, this chapter explores how the disordered fictional spaces in Pullman’s narrative constitute a direct critique of the abuses at work in the reader’s world. As such, his trilogy challenges readers to recognize and repair the dystopias in their own worlds and to accept the Keatsian negative capabilities of ambiguity, mystery and uncertainty and to reject easy fantasy in favor of truth.

#### **Phase Space, Possible Space, Spaces of Possibles**

In his Patrick Hardy Lecture to the Children’s Book Circle in 1997, Pullman opened his speech with the declaration that “children’s books, for various reasons at this time in our

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was originally published in *Children’s Literature in Education* Online First, 03 August 2010, DOI:1007/s10583-010-9112-1.

literary history, open out on a wideness and amplitude—a moral and mental spaciousness—that adult literature seems to have turned its back on” (“Let’s write it in red” 44). According to Pullman, this “amplitude” and “wideness” have to do with the ways in which children’s and young adult literature often tackle issues of greater moral and ethical complexity than does literature marketed to a strictly adult audience. Children’s literature, he argues, makes room for bigger questions and takes potentially greater risks than adult literature.

Characterizing adult fiction in the French daily, *L’Express*, Pullman opines (perhaps somewhat facetiously) that:

beaucoup de livres pour adultes très estimés et renommés ne soulèvent que des problèmes anodins comme ‘Ai-je le cul bien moulé là-dedans?’ ‘Mon équipe de foot va-t-elle gagner?’ ‘Que vais-je devenir maintenant qu’elle m’a quitté?’ Alors les livres pour enfants posent les questions essentielles ‘D’où viens-je?’ ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un être humain?’ ‘Qu’est-ce le Bien?’ Ces questions profondes, fondamentales, vous ne les trouverez pas dans la littérature pour adultes, mais dans les livres que lisent les enfants. (qtd. in Festaëts par. 19) <sup>2</sup>

While arguments about what constitutes children’s and adult literature are on-going, it is certainly true that *His Dark Materials* engages with questions of identity, humanity, and goodness, as well as questions of knowledge, experience and responsibility.

This chapter examines these questions in light of the issue of space. Indeed, issues of space are at the heart of how Pullman understands literature for readers of *all* ages. As we saw in the introduction, this type of “spaciousness” has to do in part with the ways in which literature for young adult readers engages in questions of potentially greater ethical difficulty than fiction marketed to adult readers. Not surprisingly then, the physical, geographical, mental and moral spaces of *His Dark Materials* force readers and protagonists to confront

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<sup>2</sup>Translation: “many esteemed and renowned books for adults only deal with anodyne problems like, ‘Does my butt look good in this?’ ‘Will my soccer team win?’ ‘What will I become now that she’s left me?’ Whereas children’s books ask essential questions: ‘Where do I come from?’ ‘What is a human being?’ ‘What is Good?’ These are profound, fundamental questions that you won’t find in books for adults but you will find them in the books children are reading.”

moments of staggering complexity and profound difference. These disconcerting confrontations, explains Karen Patricia Smith, force “readers to make a leap in understanding and acquire emotional strength...” (145). The strength for such a leap, however, does not come from certainty but from openness to the multiple and often ambiguous possible spaces which Pullman’s readers confront. Moreover, a figurative ‘leap’ requires space in which readers and protagonists can move beyond the bounds of the familiar and the recognizable into the unfamiliar, dangerous, and uncanny spaces of Pullman’s narrative.

While critical discussions of fantasy in general and Pullman’s trilogy in particular often invoke Foucault’s concept of heterotopias or use the concept of multiple worlds more generally as an organizing principle,<sup>3</sup> I argue that discussions of space are paramount to issues of adolescence and young adulthood. At the same time, space in *His Dark Materials* is also understood in a broader sense as a space of possibility, chance, and choice. In the same lecture, Pullman employed the term “phase space” from the field of dynamics as a way to illustrate the infinite possibilities of the fictional text. In Pullman’s words, *phase space* “refers to the un-trackable complexity of changing systems. It’s a notional space which contains not just the actual consequences of the present moment, but all the possible consequences” (“Let’s write it in red” 47). Phase space is a concept that includes all the possible outcomes, and all the possible outcomes of those previous outcomes, *ad infinitum*. The concept of phase space governs not only *what is*, but also all the potential permutations of *what might have been* and the future permutations of *what yet may be*. As a metaphor for the simultaneous existence of multiple outcomes, phase space accurately captures the infinite

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<sup>3</sup>For examples the former, see Nikolajeva, Jenkins and McNamee; for the latter see Tucker.

world spaces of *His Dark Materials*, as well as the diverse inter- and extra-textual spaces onto which Pullman's trilogy opens.<sup>4</sup>

Elaborating on Pullman's phase space, John Rowe Townsend writes that "[a] story must make its way through a web of possibilities, fixing them as it goes; with each choice that it makes other choices are closed..." (417). The combination of chance and choice permeates each volume of *His Dark Materials* calls to mind Pierre Bourdieu's definition of "the space of possibles" (234) in *The Rules of Art* (1995). For Bourdieu, a "space of possibles" is conceptually similar to phase space. A "space of possibles" signifies the simultaneous coexistence of multiple outcomes that can potentially result from a series of choices. Bourdieu notes that given another set of variables, or "a different opportunity to deploy their dispositions" (235), members of a field have a new group of possible options and decisions. Each new option or decision, in turn, sets in motion an equally different series of possible outcomes.

Admittedly, Bourdieu's analysis focuses on fields of literary and cultural production.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of a "space of possibles" resonates powerfully as a potential theoretical construct for *His Dark Materials*. Although questions of choice and possibility are by necessity at issue in all the series in this study, Pullman's narrative is the one which deliberately and repeatedly stages how the narrative could have been different based on

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<sup>4</sup> For a reading of Pullman's "phase space" as it applies to hypertext, online narrative and Pullman's webpage at Random House, see Margaret Mackey's article, "Playing in the Phase Space: Contemporary Forms of Fictional Pleasure" in *Signal* 88 (1999): 6-33. As a media scholar, Mackey is more interested in the ways in which readers use the space and additional information about *His Dark Materials* on Pullman's Random House website to continue thinking about elements in the narrative. This chapter, by contrast, is specifically concerned with Pullman's narrative, not with the online spaces in which it is discussed, debated, and in the case of some fanfictions, rewritten.

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu's examples are the literary field of nineteenth-century French letters. "To grasp the effect of the space of possibles, which acts as a discloser of dispositions, it suffices... to imagine what people such as Barcos, Flaubert or Zola might have been if they had found in another state of the field a different opportunity to deploy their dispositions" (235).

characters' previous choices. Imagining possible outcomes occurs throughout the series.<sup>6</sup>

Pullman's characters repeatedly choose between tolerance and violence, conquest and acceptance. The narrative stages moments in which the protagonists, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry, consider the myriad, chance occurrences and early decisions that have affected the course of their journey. In *The Subtle Knife*, for example, both Will and Lyra realize that:

many tiny chances had conspired to bring them to this place. Each of those chances might have gone a different way. Perhaps in another world, another Will had not seen the window in Sunderland Avenue, and had wandered on tired and lost toward the Midlands until he was caught. And in another world, another Pantalaimon had persuaded another Lyra not to stay in the retiring room, and another Lord Asriel had been poisoned, and another Roger had survived to play with that Lyra forever on the roofs and in the alleys of another unchanging Oxford. (SK 235)

These sequences of fictional decisions and their unforeseeable consequences underscore Bourdieu's contention that "each individual has 'counterparts' in other possible worlds in the form of the ensemble of people each could have been if the world had been different" (*Rules* 235). The emphasis on chance occurrences and multiple possibilities is reminiscent of Bourdieu's similar assertion in *In Other Words* (1990) that "one can always establish things that could have been otherwise, indeed, *are* otherwise in other places and other conditions" (15). This is of course, precisely what stories do: authors construct a series of possible options that could potentially answer the question, "What if?"<sup>7</sup> In the case of fantasy, these

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<sup>6</sup> Two major examples of the dramatization of chance include the battle between armored bears Iorek Byrnison and Iofur Rykinison: "[t]here were two kinds of beardom opposed here, two futures, two destinies. Iofur had begun to take them in one direction, and Iorek would take them in another, and in the same moment, one future would close forever as the other began to unfold" (GC 349). Similarly, Lyra's father Lord Asriel explains multiple worlds in terms of the probable landings of a tossed coin: "it can come down heads or tails....Until that moment, the two possibilities were equal. But on another world, it does come down tails. And when that happens the two worlds split apart.... one moment several things are possible, the next moment only one happens, and the rest don't exist. Except that other worlds have sprung into being on which they *did* happen" (GC 377).

<sup>7</sup> As early as 1973, Jane Langton pointed out that the question, "What if?" must be immediately followed by the question, "Then what?" Like Pullman, who insists that he does not write fantasy but instead writes works of "stark realism" (Parsons and Nicholson 131), Langton's essay emphasizes the critical necessity answering both "What if?" and "Then what?" questions in terms of psychological realism. "It is the *really* that must be stressed.

options are most often “otherwise.” As Millicent Lenz explains, “by posing ‘what if?’ questions, the writer brings these ‘possible’ other worlds into being imaginatively through the astonishing imagery of words...” (“Philip Pullman” 131). These potential other worlds are more than the narrative window-dressing traditionally called setting. Rather, such spaces make possible the desire for change that fiction readers often crave. Marina Warner explains the pleasures of fictional departures from realism in regards to the fantasy genre. Warner writes that “[t]he breaking of rules of natural law and verisimilitude creates the fictional world with its own laws....There is an intrinsic pleasure in the reader or listener’s given freedom to enter that world, inhabit it, move inside it” (18-19). Far from being an “escapist” pursuit, reading fantasy is instead a transgressive act that insists on the multiplicity and possibility of other spaces and confirms Foucault’s similar assertion that heterotopias function as spaces in which “real sites...are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (*Of Other Spaces* 24).

The dystopic nature of Pullman’s fictional spaces allows for his protagonists’ necessary disobedience and subversion of the rules governing these spaces in order to survive. As the work of Michel Foucault shows, transgression works to expose the limits governing the spaces in which we live. Crossing a demarcation or boundary that governs a space reveals and exposes the spaces beyond those limits. In *Language, Counter-Memory and Practice* (1977), Foucault notes that “transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes...” (34). As Pullman’s protagonists Lyra and Will move into new and forbidding spaces, they are forced, as is

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*Realism sharpens fantasy*” (433). In specific reference to the work of Pullman and J. K. Rowling, Margaret Meek has recently added that, “[t]he reader is invited to consider different possibilities in answer to ‘what would happen if?’...” (175).

Pullman's reader, to face the disappearance of old boundaries and to reevaluate their assumptions and beliefs about the spaces in which they live.

Drawing on quantum theory and theoretical physics, Pullman's series spans multiple alternate universes, from the familiar yet strange world of Jordan College and menacing Bolvangar, to Cittàgazze, a city haunted by invisible, soul-devouring Specters, and the pastoral but imperiled world of the *mulefa*, as well as the suburbs of the dead and hell itself. At once a page-turning, fast-paced adventure novel and a thoughtful reflection on innocence, experience, creativity and responsibility, Pullman's trilogy bears out Jonathan Culler's assertion cited earlier that "literature always seeks to outplay itself, in acts of reinvention..." (240). Indeed, it is precisely by retelling Milton's *Paradise Lost* and narrativizing Heinrich von Kleist's "On Marionette Theater" that Pullman highlights the need of all readers for true and compelling stories.

Moreover, Pullman's rewriting of the fall from grace as necessary *bildung* contests Fredric Jameson's suggestion that our desire for narrative is born out of a sense of wistful melancholia. In his essay, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Jameson envisions a moment in the near future when writers will reach the limits of creative invention. Jameson argues that "the writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles and new worlds—they have already been invented..." (1965). Rather than looking towards the future with hope, Jameson's "inverted millenarianism" (qtd. in Leach xiii) suggests that past stories merely "gratify a deeper and more properly nostalgic desire to return to the older period" (1966). In Jameson's view, these stories simultaneously remind us of our desire to be other and confirm the impossibility of such a transformation.



Contrary to Jameson's assertions, the success of *His Dark Materials* in academia and popular culture suggests that the invention and the *re-invention* of new worlds are alive and well. Writing in the French journal, *Cahiers Robinson*, Anne Besson calls the trilogy "une vaste entreprise de réécriture des mythes culturels, et plus généralement d'une réflexion sur les pouvoirs de la fiction" (125).<sup>8</sup> Pullman's series not only actively seeks out new world spaces. It also knowingly recreates and embroiders on familiar fictional spaces—from the sulfur lakes of Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Heinrich von Kleist's graceful marionette and joust with a bear, to the world of the dead in Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil and Dante. Pullman's reinvention, however, is in no way backward-looking, as Jameson's analysis would suggest. Rather, Pullman's narrative rejects the blinkered nostalgia of escapism and fantasy in order to insist on action in the present, action rendered all the more necessary by the new world space it is our responsibility to build once the last page is turned. This space is nothing less than the republic of heaven in the world in which we live, move and have our being.<sup>9</sup>

In this chapter, I explore how the experience of alternate worlds in *The Golden Compass* (GC), *The Subtle Knife* (SK) and *The Amber Spyglass* (AS) both wounds and transforms Pullman's protagonists, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry. As they resist the devastating powers that occupy these dystopic spaces, Lyra and Will confront difference, danger and death. As different as the phases and spaces of Pullman's multiple worlds are,

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<sup>8</sup> Translation: "a vast enterprise of rewriting cultural myths and more generally of a reflection on the power of fiction."

<sup>9</sup> In his essay, "The Republic of Heaven," (2001) Pullman elaborates on the republican notion of heaven as a response to the death of the Christian God. Such a republic, he writes, "enables us to see this real world, our world, as a place of infinite delight, so intensely beautiful and intoxicating that if we saw it clearly then we would want nothing more, ever. We would know that this earth is our true home, and nowhere else is" (664). Pullman's declarations of atheism aside, this idea that we have it in ourselves to build the republic of heaven is actually quite similar to the concept of *collaborative eschatology* put forward by theologians Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. See Borg and Crossan's *The Last Week* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006).

they all share one common factor: these worlds are all imperiled from within by the powers that seek to dominate and control, and imperiled from without by environmental and spiritual havoc. Lyra and Will's ability to subvert indifference and despair in search of a way forward allows for the creation and building of a new world space—the republic of heaven which their quest inaugurates. Unlike other writers in this study, Pullman's narrative is overtly religiously oriented, which tends not to be the case in Rowling or in the French fantasies I examine. As metafiction, Pullman's narrative also works to move readers into the spaces outside the text that need transformation no less than the spaces within it.

This chapter examines the ways in which spaces of multiple worlds in *His Dark Materials* frame ways of responding to abuses of power and accepting difference in order to move forward with hope. Unlike the texts of *L'Homme* and *Bottero* in which the reader is never really forced to question the ultimate success of the adolescent protagonists, Pullman's narrative is so humorless and so bleak that readers are forced to hope his protagonists will indeed survive. This hope, however, is not an escapist or fantasist's dream of a non-place or non-existent "elsewhere." Rather, it is a hope rooted in transformation whereby the *no where* of absence, loss and sorrow become the *now here* of joy, delight and wonder.<sup>10</sup> For those of us who make our lives as critics and scholars, such transformation suggests that new spaces in which to read and respond to literature exist, even if we do not yet have eyes to see them.

### **“Like ours, but different”: Lyra's Oxford**

The first of Pullman's world spaces is disconcerting in its ambiguity, alternately suggesting a world as familiar as our own while simultaneously confounding readers with a

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<sup>10</sup> In his interview with Ilene Cooper, Pullman again asserts his version of the republic in similar terms: “We need joy, we need delight, we need a belief that our lives mean something and have significance in the context of the universe and that they are connected to the universe and connected to each other” (355).

world space that defies understanding. If part one of *The Golden Compass* appears to set the story in the familiar university town of Oxford, the opening words, “Lyra and her dæmon” (GC 3), immediately shift the narrative into unfamiliar territory. A brief note confirms that the spaces of the series are far more complex than readers accustomed to single-, double-, or mixed-world fantasy universes may expect. Indeed, this multiplicity of world spaces will require the reader’s constant attention. The explanation reads:

[t]he first volume is set in a universe like ours, but different in many ways. The second volume is set in the same universe, along with the one we know. The third volume moves between many universes. (GC n. pag.)

This unsigned and untitled clue prepares the reader for the world of Lyra’s Oxford.<sup>11</sup> If Lyra’s universe initially appears familiar with its scholarly squabbles and its hierarchical class structure of servants and aristocrats, it nevertheless forces the reader to ask what sort of world these characters inhabit. Accordingly, Maude Hines describes this initial world as “[l]ike and unlike our world, recognizable in some aspects and totally unfamiliar in others, Lyra’s world presents an uncanny reality that is ‘natural’ to her and yet unnatural to us” (37). The uncanny or double nature of Lyra’s world is due to its simultaneous near-replication and distortion of the reader’s definition of ordinary, confirming Freud’s principle that fiction becomes uncanny “as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality” (951).

The “common reality” of Lyra’s world seems to match ours at the same time that it transforms it into a kind of *steampunk* collision between past and present.<sup>12</sup> Technology

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<sup>11</sup> Whether intentional or not, Pullman’s clue is in some ways misleading. Although Pullman’s second volume does begin in present-day Oxford, England or “the world we know” (SK, n. pag.), Lyra and Will spend most of their time in the world of Cittàgazze. They do not return to Lyra’s world until the *third* volume. Many thanks to Jenny Flaherty for this astute observation.

<sup>12</sup> Rachel Falconer and Maria Nikolajeva have both remarked on Pullman’s transformation of the normal. See Falconer’s discussion of Pullman in chapter four of *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children’s Fiction*

dates from the early twentieth century: telephones operate by crank; homes are lit with naphtha or anbaric (Pullman's word for *electric*) lights. Characters travel by zeppelin, hot-air balloon or chthonic railway, but never by automobile or airplane. Like technology, the physical geography of this world is uncanny, and juxtaposes the familiar with the new. Texas is a country, not a state; portions of Western Europe and America are called New France and New Denmark. The university town of Oxford and glamorous capital in London are part of a country called Brytain. Rivers and fens are populated by boat people similar to gypsies, but known as gyptians, who live in nomadic, bohemian clans. These differences between Lyra's universe and the reader's world suggest what French scholar Anne Besson "une porosité des univers..." ("Autres Mondes" 8),<sup>13</sup> or a deliberate fluidity between the reader's world and that of the text. By creating a dis-orienting geography within his initial world, Pullman prepares his readers for the multiple world space which will become so crucial to his trilogy.

At the same time that it plays on the familiar, this fictional universe of *The Golden Compass* also combines elements of the fantastic. Lyra's is a world of talking armored polar bears and clans of witches, beautiful creatures who fly on fir branches and who live for hundreds of years. In this world, the "space of the possibles" is epitomized by the dæmon. The reader gradually learns that the dæmon is an animal familiar like Jung's *anima/animus*, which acts as an externalized conscience or soul. Whereas adults' dæmons maintain a fixed form, children's dæmons change shape and species until the child reaches puberty. A

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and *Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2008) and Nikolajeva's chapter "Children's? Adult? Human?" in *Transcending Boundaries: Writing For a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*. Ed. Sandra Beckett. Children's Literature and Culture Ser. New York: Garland, 1999. 63-80. Denis Labbé defines the steampunk genre as works which take place in an alternate Victorian universe combining the science of 19<sup>th</sup>-century steam power with futuristic elements common to Jules Vernes and H.G. Wells (303).

<sup>13</sup>Translation: "a porosity of universes..."

dæmon's final form, "tells you what sort of person you are" (*GC* 167). As a child, Lyra wants her own dæmon, Pantalaimon, to maintain infinite mobility; she wants her own "space of possibles" to remain boundless and unlimited. Yet as Lenz observes, "[b]eing an adult entails accepting the narrowing of one's potential possible 'shapes,' learning to live with a diminishment of protean possibilities..." ("Philip Pullman" 140). Growing up means that Lyra must accept that the choices that she makes circumscribe Pan's final shape and the kind of adult she will become. Her choices have a direct correlation to the places and spaces in which she can act. As some spaces become accessible, still others will remain forever beyond her reach.

Some critics, such as Kristine Moruzi and David Gooderham, argue that these registers of unchanging nature, destiny and chance are disempowering.<sup>14</sup> Yet rather than limiting the narrative to passive acceptance of fate, chance and nature, they instead highlight the necessity of choice as a moral action. The witch Serafina Pekkala tells Lyra, "you cannot change what you are, only what you do" (*GC* 315). Conscious choice, the act of choosing one path among many and thereby shaping one's own phase space, field, or "space of the possibles" is paramount to the formation of character. The act of differentiating between one "space of the possibles" and another gives choice its transformative power. Will and Lyra not only transform themselves, but their choices also transform the spaces through which they travel. The hell-on-earth that is Bolvangar is destroyed, while the abject space of hell itself is reconfigured as a passage rather than a terminal destination in *The Amber Spyglass*.

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<sup>14</sup> Gooderham insists that the trilogy relentlessly undermines the very opportunities for freedom and choice it purports to provide. Gooderham calls Pullman's approach "excessive" (170) in its depiction of what he sees as an "extreme moral interdict..." (171). Moruzi concurs, maintaining that "despite how [Lyra and Will] have demonstrably moved beyond being mere children, their decisions as young adults are inconsequential because neither of them is given alternatives from which to choose" (59).

In the trilogy, choices made for personal gain, power and ambition, like those made by Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter, are juxtaposed with choices made by Lyra, Will, and Mary who make choices to act on behalf of others rather than themselves. Will, for example, realizes that even though his knife has infinite power, the choices he makes in the present will determine the choices and spaces of possibles available to him in the future. Maintaining mobility means choosing a course of action, even as that course closes off the possibility of all other choices: “all Will’s choices existed at once. But to keep then all in existence meant doing nothing. He had to choose, after all” (AS 13). To keep all options open is to succumb to paralysis. It is only by deliberately choosing a course of action that one can move forward. Making such a choice, however, requires careful, thoughtful deliberation and knowledge of the potential and real consequences of a decision. For example, it is no accident that Lyra spends less time considering the consequences of her choices in the early parts of the narrative. Her decisions to enter the retiring room and to follow Mrs. Coulter to London at the beginning of *The Golden Compass* are impulsive, whereas her later ones to leave Pantalaimon (AS 281) and to separate from Will (AS 484) are chosen in full view of the painful consequences and spaces of possibles those choices will entail.

In contradistinction to space for choice and reflection, the powers that govern Lyra’s world exert a vice-grip on all types of intellectual inquiry. This world is dominated by a strange mixture of scientific and religious rhetoric that creates a no-man’s land prohibiting question, dissent, and debate. A brief historical overview explains that this is a world ruled by a combination of the worst abuses of the Catholic and Protestant traditions, in which

the references to the Catholic Inquisition and Calvinist asceticism signal that intellectual space in this world is indeed dangerous:

[e]ver since Pope John Calvin had moved the seat of the Papacy to Geneva and set up the Consistorial Court of Discipline, the Church's power over every aspect of life had been absolute. The Papacy itself had been abolished after Calvin's death, and a tangle of courts, colleges, and councils, collectively known as the Magisterium, had grown up in its place. (GC 30)

This passage establishes the “normal” in Lyra's world, while playing on the reader's knowledge of church history even as it distorts it. Readers at once recognize the semantic registers of ecclesiastical power and political absolutism, such that readers recognize Pullman's fictional church as the stock fantasy enemy whose power Lyra will ultimately subvert. Whereas L'Homme and Bottero's respective malevolent deities in *Le Visage de L'Ombre* and *Les Tentacules du Mal* tend towards the non-human monstrous in the tradition of Tolkien's Mordor, Pullman's depiction of his fictional Church has the effect of forcing readers to think critically about the role of Christianity in their own world.

In Lyra's world, the Church concentrates its forces on shutting down possibility in its own world, as well as the other worlds whose existence it refuses to acknowledge. Besson for example, notes that Pullman's Church erases choice and possibility rather than encouraging either. Besson writes, “l'Église elle-même voudrait réécrire l'histoire, mais pour en effacer tout choix, alors que c'est précisément cette ouverture illimitée des possibles qui valorise la trilogie...” (133).<sup>15</sup> Multiplicity and difference implied by the existence of alternate worlds

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<sup>15</sup>Translation: “the Church itself would like to rewrite history in order to erase all choice from it, whereas it is precisely this unlimited opening of possibles that valorizes the entire trilogy...” (133).

constitute a direct threat to the Church's control because the Magisterium cannot tolerate the ambiguity and mystery that unknown, "other" spaces imply.<sup>16</sup>

The ambiguous suggestion of multiple spaces is further confirmed by physical representations and models to which the characters have access and which constitute the very proof that the Magisterium's totalitarian restrictions attempt to deny. Within the textual space of *His Dark Materials*, characters examine photographs, objects and scale models of different, alternate spaces whose existence they are not allowed to admit. Lord Asriel's magnificent photogram shows "an unmistakable outline of a city: towers, domes, walls...Buildings and streets suspended in the air" (GC 23). Mrs. Coulter remembers an heretical model of multiple worlds with "[f]olds within folds, corners and edges both containing and being contained: its inside was everywhere and its outside was everywhere else" (AS 395). Lyra's alethiometer mentally directs her as she travels through world spaces with the aid of Will's subtle knife.<sup>17</sup> Like Mary's amber spyglass, all of these objects render the invisible visible. They offer a more nuanced understanding of space and provide new ways of seeing space, surroundings, and environs as multiple, polyvalent, and plural rather

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<sup>16</sup> Pullman's inverted, or negative theology is not new, and it is important to point out most serious theological readings of *His Dark Materials* note the similarities between Christian ethics and the thoughtful engagement Pullman's narrative advocates. Pat Pinsett for example draws on a wealth of feminist theology to assert the "kinship" (200) between Pullman, feminist readings of the divine and the feminist response to patriarchy of the Christian tradition. Similarly, Jonathan and Kenneth Padley argue that Pullman's willfull misreading of the Christianity "bears no resemblance to the classical Christian expression of God" (328) while his heroes, Lyra, Will and Mary exhibit the very "victories which Christianity claims for Christ and Mary" (325).

<sup>17</sup> Pullman's original title for *The Golden Compass* was *Northern Lights*. It retains the latter title in the United Kingdom. Although American readers frequently infer that the titular compass refers to Lyra's alethiometer, Pullman has pointed out in numerous interviews that the phrase refers to the compasses with which Milton's God circumscribes the earth from chaos. See Book VII of *Paradise Lost* "He took the golden compasses, prepared/In God's eternal store, to circumscribe/This universe" (v.225-229) and William Blake's painting *Ancient of Days (God as an Architect)* (1794) which depicts God with a single golden compass. For Pullman's explanation, see his interview with Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholason in *The Lion and The Unicorn* 23.1 (1999):116-134.



than singular.<sup>18</sup> Lyra, Mary and Will's abilities to recognize spatial multiplicity underscore Pullman's pedagogy of tolerance and the necessity of sharing space rather than dominating it, as the Magisterium seeks to do.

For Lyra, the new and unknown world she sees in Lord Asriel's photogram is a source of fascination and wonder; it sparks her curiosity and motivates her interest in the unknown space she knows only as "the North." Her journey with the gyptians away from the familiar worlds of Oxford and London marks her transition into a new and menacing space. Unlike the cosmopolitan world of her childhood, the snow-covered arctic is at once inhospitable and inscrutable. Lyra's knowledge of this spatial shift is marked by sensory recognition of this difference. She notices how this space defies concrete definition, how it possesses "something animal and musky and something else that was cold and blank and wild..." (168). The unnamable nature of the North obliquely indicates the dangers its barren wilderness contains. As Lyra moves into this unfamiliar geographical space, suspicion of its danger is confirmed by Kaisa, the goose dæmon of the witch Serafina Pekkala. Kaisa's depiction of Bolvangar is chilling. He tells Lyra and the gyptians that:

there is an air of hatred and fear over the place and for miles around....Animals keep away too. No birds fly there; lemmings and foxes have fled. Hence the name Bolvangar: the fields of evil. They don't call it that. They call it 'the station.' But to everyone else it is Bolvangar. (187)

In the animals' language, signifier and signified directly correspond. The name Bolvangar translates to "the fields of evil." By including the word "evil" within the place name, Bolvangar, both signifier and signified gesture to the action that occurs there. Similarly, the

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<sup>18</sup> Kaisa's explanation of spatial relationships emphasizes multiplicity: "They aren't part of this universe at all; even the furthest stars are part of this universe, but the lights show us a different universe entirely. Not further way, but interpenetrating with this one. Here, on this deck, millions of other universes exist, unaware of one another....We are as close as a heartbeat, but we can never touch or see or hear these other worlds except in the Northern Lights" (GC 188).

menacing but vague appellation, “the station,” matches the equally sinister reference to Mrs. Coulter’s General Oblation Board as “they.” The disjunctive split between these two signifiers is indicative of the more physical splitting process of intercision, which severs the connection between children and their dæmons. Mrs. Coulter’s invention of the silver guillotine that snaps the bond between child and his or her dæmon is a metaphorization of her name.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Mrs. Coulter takes a pathological interest in the suffering of her child victims and their dæmons that her machine slices apart.

The implications of Mrs. Coulter’s abuses are clarified when Lyra meets the severed child, Tony Marakos. Tony’s dæmon has been cut away, leaving him exposed and defenseless, “like someone without a face, or with their ribs laid open and their heart torn out: something unnatural and uncanny that belonged to the world of nightghasts, not the waking world of sense” (GC 214). In a reversal of Freud’s uncanny in which the ‘double’ is *unheimlichkeit* or frightening precisely because of its familiar appearance, Tony’s separation from his *natural* double marks him as “other.”<sup>20</sup> Because dæmons are by definition visible, the absence of Tony’s own double, Ratter, signifies the degree to which the natural is inverted, just as the vague qualifier “something” gestures to an act of mutilation that defies language. In *His Dark Materials*, dæmons serve as what Freud’s colleague, psychoanalyst Otto Rank called “an ‘energetic denial of the power of death’ ” (qtd. in Freud 940).

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<sup>19</sup> Shelly King points out that a *coulter* is a vertical blade on a plow that slices the earth (111). Asriel is the name for the angel of death in rabbinical tradition and the name of the archangel in Islamic scripture that separates the soul from the body at death (King 112 and Townsend 419). In addition to her affinity with Blake’s Lyca discussed below, Lyra’s name refers to the brightest star in the Northern constellation, Vega, and is also a reference to the early Christian theologian Nicolas of Lyra (King 111-112 and Matthews 125).

<sup>20</sup> See Freud’s essay, “The Uncanny” (1919) in which he theorizes the uncanny as “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (930). For a more complete reading of the role of dæmons in Pullman’s trilogy, see Maude Hine’s article “Second Nature: Dæmons and Ideology in *The Golden Compass*” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essays on Philip Pullman’s Trilogy*. Ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005): 37-47 and John Rowe Townsend’s “Paradise Reshaped” in *Horn Book* 78.4(2002): 415-421.

Alternatively, the invisibility of Tony's dæmon signals the boy's death, and underscores the terrifying and absolute power of Mrs. Coulter's General Oblation Board at Bolvangar.

Tony's presence as "other," as half-alive, deformed and no longer wholly himself, inspires Lyra's fear, and serves as a reminder of the dystopic space in which she now travels. At the same time, however, her visceral experience of Tony's painful difference teaches her to forgo horror and to replace fear with kindness: "revulsion struggled with compassion, and compassion won" (GC 216). Lyra's choice to care for Tony is an act of moral courage that simultaneously defies the violation of Tony's mental and personal space at Bolvangar, and foregrounds her growing empathy for the suffering, the dying and the dead in the latter parts of the trilogy.

Moving through the multiple worlds and spaces of *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass* brings Lyra into contact with versions of difference that like Tony, force her to respond with the compassion and care that are so absent from these fictional worlds. Writing in *The Crossover Novel* (2008), Rachel Falconer suggests that in Pullman's narrative *bildung* marks the process of "becoming *more* empathetic, *more* able to flow into the thoughts and feelings of others" (91). Lyra's empathy not only highlights the dystopia that surrounds her, it also bears out Lenz's assertion that *His Dark Materials* does not offer "*answers* to the ills that presently beset us, but rather ways of meeting them with courage and surviving them with grace" ("Awakening" 1; italics orig.). Her struggles to confront difficulty and danger in order to "keep promises, no matter how difficult they are" (AS 195) form a model for Pullman's readers who recognize their own world in the uncanny alternate worlds of the narrative. Lyra's model asserts Pullman's point that those readers must respond to the spaces in their own worlds with no less care and concern than do Lyra, Mary, and Will.

Like Tony, Lyra's own physical and sexual space is also violated when she and Pantalaimon are captured and brought to Bolvangar. In the space of the station itself, Lyra's terror, her knowledge that "for hundreds of miles around her little bed there was nothing but fear" (*GC* 246), establishes Bolvangar as utterly dystopic. Lyra experiences her own near-intercision as an invasion of her personal sexual and psychological space, akin to rape: "It was as if an alien hand had reached right inside where no hand had a right to be, and wrenched at something deep and precious" (*GC* 275). The language of Lyra's molestation reminds readers not only of condoned sexual abuse of children by church officials, but also of the practice of female genital mutilation in our own world.<sup>21</sup> Lyra's conscious knowledge of the attempt on her life is crucial to establishing Pullman's "Church" as evil and profoundly unworthy of loyalty.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, intercision shuts down possibility for growth. It literally excises children and their dæmons' access to the metaphorical "space of possibles," spaces which are necessary for the creative decision-making that marks maturity.

Lyra, for example, notices how an intercised nurse at Bolvangar lacks mental elasticity necessary for creative invention. Lyra sees a woman who "would be able to stitch a wound or change a bandage, but never to tell a story [...] it wasn't only imagination the nurse lacked, it was curiosity as well" (238). Intercision excises the capacity for creativity, storytelling, and narrative. To lose the capacity to tell one's own story is to be excised from the agency necessary for constructing one's identity. Intercision is so hideous because it

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<sup>21</sup> This open condemnation of abusive sexual practices in the name of religion forms a major ideological strand of the trilogy. Ruta Skadi's report on involuntary circumcision and excision of children in all worlds condemns the Church's stance against sexuality more directly: "[t]hey cut their sexual organs, yes, both boys and girls; they cut them with knives so that they shan't feel. That's what the Church does, and every church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling" (*SK* 45).

<sup>22</sup> Naomi Wood agrees, and writes that "Pullman, in the republican tradition of Blake and of Milton's political writings, depicts corrupt ecclesiastical and political authorities to whom allegiance would be evil" (239).

denies alternatives, and by extension, the possibility for transformation, change, growth, and hope.

To Lyra and the reader, this inability to tell a story signals a dangerous mental vacuum. Like Pullman, Lyra values storytelling as an art, and she uses her skills as a liar and storyteller to survive the worlds and spaces she traverses. As Marina Warner argues in *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Other Ways of Telling the Self* (2002), “stories do offer a way of imagining alternatives, mapping possibilities, exciting hope, warding off danger by forestalling it, casting spells of order on the unknown ahead” (212). Lyra’s facility with spinning untruths echoes her own name, a link that becomes explicit in *The Amber Spyglass* when she learns that it is only by telling true stories that she and Will can rescue the dead from hell.<sup>23</sup> Artistic creation—choosing to tell true stories—transforms both teller and listener and the space in which they find themselves.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that the Church in Lyra’s world has to solidify its power through the abolition of inventiveness, creativity, and curiosity illustrates the degree to which Lyra, who personifies all of these qualities, opposes it. Hines, for example, remarks that “Lyra’s character is one that continually pokes and prods at the edges of things, testing rules and acting against her own destiny” (40). Lauren Shohet agrees, writing that for Lyra, “breaking rules enables [her] to keep alive the emancipating rebellion against tradition...” (26). Like

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<sup>23</sup> The harpy No-Name violently rejects Lyra’s fantastic story (AS 293), but she responds to Lyra true story of real human experience with hunger: “Because it was true...Because she spoke the truth. Because it was nourishing. Because it was feeding us. Because we couldn’t help it. Because it was true. Because we had no idea that there was anything but wickedness. Because it brought us news of the world and the sun and the wind and the rain. Because it was true” (AS 317).

<sup>24</sup> Pullman expounds on the moral responsibility of the storyteller as teacher in his May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture, “So She Went into the Garden...” in which he states, “all stories teach, whether or not they have an evident moral” (39). Millicent Lenz agrees and explains the importance of the metafictional elements in *His Dark Materials*. Lenz write that “[n]ourished with life-affirming stories, the imagination is made ready to accept human experience in the fullness of its contradictions, the mix of its creative and destructive qualities” (“Story as a Bridge to Transformation” 48-49).

her father's revolt against the Authority (Pullman's negative version of an omniscient, omnipotent god) which forms the subtext of *The Amber Spyglass*, Lyra's rebellion also seeks out new ways of understanding the world spaces in which she finds herself, and gives her the impetus to move into the new and unknown world in the sky above her.

Yet unlike her father's Machiavellian violence that permits Roger's murder, Lyra's journey forward is marked by a sense of atonement and responsibility. Her choice to travel into the new and unknown world space is neither escapist nor easy. Lyra's father murders her best friend; she loses the guides and mentors who have accompanied her; she realizes her parents care less for her than their own ends. She and Pantalaimon know that the "doubt, and danger, and fathomless mysteries" (GC 399) that remain will be just as difficult to resolve as the "pain and death and fear" (GC 399) of the world they leave behind. What allows them to decide to act with courage is the knowledge that they are not alone. Against formidable odds, daemon and girl have managed to remain together. Even as the space around them rips apart, Lyra and Pan's commitment to each other redefines their own space as interior rather than exterior. Unlike the unknown and uncertain spaces surrounding them, the space that girl and daemon create for each other allows them to move forward into a world no less menacing than the dystopia they leave behind.

### **"Profoundly Alien": Cittàgazze**

Like the initial world places of Lyra's Oxford, Bolvangar, and Svalbard in *The Golden Compass*, Pullman's depiction of Oxford, England in *The Subtle Knife* is also dystopic, and the odds of survival are no less formidable. The second volume opens with the book's protagonist, Will Parry, reflecting on how he can protect his mentally-ill mother from the taunting neighborhood children and from prying questions of other adults. Keenly aware

that mother-child role is reversed, Will understands that his mother's mental space is compromised: "[T]hose enemies of his mother's were not in the world out there, but in her mind. That made them no less real, no less frightening and dangerous..." (SK 8). For Will, "the world out there" is as dystopic as the paranoia in his mother's mental world. If his mother fears the invisible, Will operates in a world filled with cruel classmates and concerned adults whose interest in his mother threatens to separate him from her. Negotiating this dystopia requires Will to practice invisibility, silence and discretion, skills diametrically opposed to Lyra's aristocratic confidence as a liar. Yet like Lyra, the absence of parental care requires him to take sole responsibility for his own survival. This survival is all the more necessary when Will realizes that he has inadvertently murdered one of the burglars who break into his home in the opening chapter. He escapes into the window in the air with no less urgency than Lyra's crossing from Artic Svalbard to the city in the clouds.

Will recognizes that this new world space is "something profoundly alien" (SK 13), but his own world is so dangerous and unstable that he reasons "whatever this new world was, it had to be better than the one he'd just left" (SK 14). On the surface, the new world Will enters from the hole in the air does appear idyllic. This strange space appears to be a summer resort town: "[I]t was the kind of place where people came out late at night to eat and drink, to dance and enjoy music" (SK 14). This space initially appears normal and inviting with its open-air cafes, temples, columns and statuary. Its uncanny-ness derives from a profound absence of human activity, a void that prefigures its mysterious, dangerous nature as a dystopic space. The city's silence echoes the silence imposed by the Magisterium in the first volume and warns Will and the reader that although this space is different, it is unlikely to be safe.

This absence of safety is confirmed by Will's subsequent fight with Lyra and prefigures the physical and vicious battles that follow in Pullman's second volume. Moreover, this confrontation forces both children to confront extreme difference. Will is disconcerted by the presence of Pantalaimon, "his head was ringing with the strangeness of it" (SK 19). Lyra, for her part, can only ask, "En't there *anyone* in your world like us? Are they all like you, with their dæmons hidden away?" (SK 22). Lyra's shock is due to the fact that Will, unlike Tony and Roger, remains whole and un-severed, despite the absence of a physical soul/dæmon. Andrew Leet's observation that "the more deeply the reader delves into the trilogy, the more he distances himself from what is considered everyday or normal..." (175) is no less true for Lyra and Will. In the respective presence/absence of each other's dæmons, each protagonist sees the uncanny juxtaposition of what Freud called "on one hand, what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (933).

Pullman's second volume makes Lyra the stranger of the two children. *The Subtle Knife* focalizes the narrative through Will's eyes rather than Lyra's, confirming Hines' assertion that "the second book in the trilogy complicates those questions [of normalcy] by interrogating what the first book set up as natural" (45). Will, who has survival skills, is flabbergasted to have to be forced to shepherd the half-wild, half-spoiled Lyra through the basics of cooking baked beans, washing her hair, and cleaning the dishes. These differences only become more pronounced when the children return through the patch in the air to Will's Oxford. Faced with a world at once so similar and so different from her own Oxford, Lyra's "wide-eyed helplessness" (SK 62) contrasts with Will's competence in navigating the space unseen and unnoticed.



Whereas *The Golden Compass* establishes Lyra's competence as a reader and interpreter of world spaces with the help of her alethiometer, a sort of magical, truth-telling symbol reader, *The Subtle Knife* frustrates these skills by forcing her to learn how to "read" a new world space from Will. Angered by Will's refusal to respect her nobility, Lyra finds the alethiometer's instructions to put aside her own quest preposterous. "The idea that *she* had come all this way in order to help *him* took her breath away" (SK 71). For Lyra, who is accustomed to commanding the gyptian children and urchins in her own Oxford, the suggestion of equality with Will is disconcerting. She is no longer a queen among subjects; in this new space she is now dependent on Will's expertise, not her own. The space of Will's Oxford is an uncomfortable reminder of her own dependence and the limits of her own knowledge.

As a result, the experience of multiple world spaces gradually dissolves Lyra's assumed superiority by forcing her to confront the foreign and the unfamiliar. Lyra, who can read her alethiometer with a mystical ease that she compares to "climbing down the ladder at night" (GC 151), is equally disconcerted by her illiteracy of the symbols in Will's world:

this Oxford was disconcertingly different, with patches of poignant familiarity right next to the downright outlandish: why had they painted those yellow lines on the road? What were those little white patches dotting every sidewalk? (In her own world, they had never heard of chewing gum.) What could those red and green lights mean at the corner of the road? It was all much harder to read than the alethiometer. (SK 66)

Like William Blake's Lyca, the "little girl lost" in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, Lyra is bereft of a navigational code, a reminder that her supposed expertise in first volume is in fact an illusion. Pullman's allusions to Lyca emphasize Lyra's inability to understand Will's Oxford, "a lost little girl in a strange world, belonging nowhere" (SK 62) and her subsequent loss of confidence when her alethiometer is stolen, "[w]ithout the

alethiometer, she was ... just a little girl, lost” (SK 141). Yet whereas Blake’s Lyca sleeps in the care and guardianship of the lion and lioness in the wilderness in *Songs of Experience*, the Lyra of *His Dark Materials* knows no such safety.<sup>25</sup> Lyra and Will spend the trilogy in such danger that Smith echoes many readers’ concerns when she remarks that “the reader may wonder whether or not the children will actually make it back” (144). If Lyra and Will’s improbable survival creates suspense, it also underscores the menacing spaces whose rules they must subvert and transgress. Because survival requires necessary disobedience, Will and Lyra’s refusal to heed the adults around them is a reminder of the arbitrary and frequently corrupt nature of adult power.

Will’s acquisition of the subtle knife does allow for the travel between these world spaces. The act of cutting windows and portals between worlds is a transgression of normal spatial limitations. Nevertheless, the cold calculus of experience requires that such a weapon cannot be claimed without great sacrifice. Will’s loss of the fingers on his left hand marks him as the wounded hero and knife-bearer, and he spends the rest of the second volume in such excruciating pain that he wonders whether he will die of blood loss (SK 236, 280). His suffering parallels Lyra’s molestation and confirms Smith’s hypothesis that Lyra and Will “undergo heightened anguish and endure injuries more serious and more devastating than their fantastic predecessors” (139). Similarly, when both children cross the river into the world of the dead, Lyra’s separation from Pantalaimon is a mirror-image of Will’s mutilated hand. Pan’s absence leaves an invisible, gapping hole in her psyche. Lyra experiences her wound as internal: “the damp and bitter air could flow in and out of her ribs, scaldingly cold

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<sup>25</sup> For a reading of Pullman’s re-writing of Blake’s poetry, see Susan Matthews’ essay, “Rousing the Faculties to Act: Pullman’s Blake for Children” in *His Dark Materials Illuminated*. Ed. Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005): 125-134 and Anne Marie Bird’s article, ““Without contraries is no progression”: dust as an all-inclusive metaphor in Philip Pullman’s ‘His Dark Materials,’ ” in *Children’s Literature in Education* 32.2 (2001):111-122.

on the raw wound where Pantalaimon had been” (AS 289). Lyra’s physical wound is internal, a mirror of her daemon’s externality just as Will’s external wound mirrors his daemon/soul’s interiority. For both Lyra and Will, the experience of physical and emotional pain is an initiation into a maturity. This initiation reaches its apotheosis when both young adults realize that their separation is the condition for the survival of all worlds at the end of *The Amber Spyglass*.

In *The Subtle Knife*, the most direct threat to Lyra and Will’s safety does not come from adults (despite the villainous appearances of Lord Boreal and Mrs. Coulter), but instead comes from other children. The narrative is pitiless in its depiction of the gangs of parentless children that roam Cittàgazze. Trapped in an abandoned temple, Will and Lyra experience the children as an anonymous mob: “[T]hey were a single mass, like a tide. They surged below him and leaped up in fury, snatching threatening, screaming, spitting...” (SK 204). Critics frequently compare the gang of children who attack Will and Lyra to William Golding’s depiction of the rival gangs of British school boys in *Lord of the Flies* (1954), or the boys in the land of toys in Collodi’s *Pinocchio* (Besson 129), intertextual connections that highlight the dystopic threat Cittàgazze poses. The children’s ferocity belies the graceful seaside city, and confirms Pullman’s argument that childhood is not, nor ever was, the preserve (or space apart) of romantic notions of innocence, kindness, pity and compassion.<sup>26</sup> Rather, adolescence is a space no less complicated and ethically questionable than adulthood. Pullman’s children are no less calculating and brutal than the Church officials in Geneva.

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<sup>26</sup> Moruzi concurs. Citing Pullman’s opinion that “It’s only sentimental adults who think kids are sweet and angelic” (Parsons and Nicholson 130), Moruzi goes on to explain that Pullman “rejects nostalgic impressions of children and childhood, insisting on a more realistic portrayal” (59). In his Carnegie Medal Acceptance Speech in 1996, Pullman described children as “ignorant little savages” (par. 5), terms which replicate his original description of Lyra in *The Golden Compass* as a “barbarian” (34) and “a coarse, greedy little savage” (36).

That these children choose barbarity from multiple “spaces of possibles” indicates the limitations of the adult/child binary which Pullman’s fiction so frequently interrogates.

That Will responds to the Cittàgazze gang with ferocity of a seasoned school fighter illustrates the space that separates him from nostalgic (and usually adult) misconceptions about children. His implacable logic—“that you had to be willing to hurt someone else, too, and he’d found out that not many people were, when it came to it; but he knew that he was” (SK 154)—exhibits the knowledge that there is no correlation between savagery and age, since his own world is as dysfunctional and as dangerous as the space of Cittàgazze.<sup>27</sup> This clear-eyed realism shifts Pullman’s narrative away from simplistic binaries of child/adult, possibility/stability, innocence/experience and moves the trilogy towards the larger question of the choices that Lyra and Will make, even as they are horrified by the dystopic consequences of their own decisions.<sup>28</sup>

Part of what makes the violence in Pullman’s narrative so disturbing—particularly to adult readers—is the fact that unlike Rowling, L’Homme and Bottero, Pullman does not allow for moments of humorous or light-hearted détente, as do Rowling, L’Homme, and Bottero. The violence Harry and his friends suffer during his confrontations with Voldemort is agonizing to be sure, but Rowling’s magical universe is equipped with spells and healing potions, such as Hogwarts’ nurse Madame Pomfrey’s ready supply of *Skele-grow*. L’Homme and Bottero both rely on the arrival of characters as *deus ex machina* to relieve the

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<sup>27</sup> See the scene in which Will tells Lyra about a fight he started at school in order to punish the boys who tortured his mother. Will remembers that, “the next day I found the boy who was leading them. I fought him and I broke his arm and I think I broke some of his teeth” (SK 232).

<sup>28</sup> Lyra realizes her own complicity in Roger’s death: “*She had brought him Roger...* She had thought she was *saving* Roger, and all the time she’d been diligently working to betray him...” (GC 380; ital. orig.). Will is forced to kill multiple times, despite his horror of necessary violence. “I hate this,” said Will passionately, “truly, truly, I hate this killing! When will it stop?” (AS 30).

suffering of Guillemot and Ewilan.<sup>29</sup> All three of these authors separate episodes of agony with typically humorous teenage banter. The fact that Pullman eschews such techniques is a constant reminder of the dystopic spaces in which Lyra and Will find themselves.

In addition to the threat of other children, Lyra and Will also learn that the dystopic space of Cittàgazze is plagued by soul-devouring Specters. Like Rowling's earlier Dementors, these invisible beings attack and feast on adult consciousness. Specters, the reader learns, are not a threat to children, because Specters crave "conscious and informed interest in the world. The immaturity of children is less attractive to them" (SK 248). Yet if children's "immaturity" protects them from Specters, such immaturity is by definition short-lived. Maturity, adolescence, and adulthood in Cittàgazze are a death sentence because Specters rob their victims of agency and the power to choose. Just as Rowling's dementors kill by robbing their victims of joy, hope, and life, the Spectral attack on the witch Lena Feldt resembles the onset of acute, clinical depression:

She felt nausea of the soul, a hideous and sickening despair, a melancholy weariness so profound that she was going to die of it. Her last conscious thought was disgust at life; her senses had lied to her. The world was not made of energy and delight but of foulness, betrayal, and lassitude. Living was hateful, and death was no better, and from end to end of the universe this was the first and last and only truth. (SK 278)

Lena loses her capacity for conscious reflection and with it, the ability to grow, change, and learn. As Lena's capacity to act collapses, so does her "space of possibles." Robbed of all agency, she is reduced to suicidal despair that forever excludes her from reaching those spaces in which life and hope remain possible. Lena's death-in-life typifies the unresponsiveness and lack of concern that brings all conscious life in all worlds to an end.

That such a vibrantly alive, sensual character as Lena succumbs to eternal indifference

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<sup>29</sup> See the last-minute arrival of Qadehar in *Qadehar le Sorcier* in chapter 37, pp. 237-241 and in *Le Visage de L'Ombre*, chapters 33-34, pp. 197-213. See also the ready sacrifice of Ellundril Chariakin in Ewilan's place in *Les Tentacules du Mal*, chapter 14, pp. 337-343.

illustrates the degree to which apathy threatens to consume all world spaces in *His Dark Materials*.

The blind acceptance of self-destruction that overcomes adults attacked by Specters in *The Subtle Knife* is also indicative of the refusal to engage with the consequences of discovery. These consequences are dramatized when Giacomo Paradisi explains “the whole sorry history” (*SK* 165) of how the subtle knife transformed the space of Cittàgasse from a flourishing merchant city and crossroads between worlds into a deserted wasteland. The creators of the subtle knife failed to consider the implications of cutting through their world and into new ones. The result, Paradisi tells Will and Lyra, is the devouring of all knowledge by the Specters:

We thought a bond was something negotiable, something that could be bought and sold and exchanged and converted....But about these bonds, we were wrong. We undid them and let the Specters in. (*SK* 165)

In Paradisi’s tale, the attempt to separate the smallest elements of matter unleashes a destructive power similar to nuclear fission, and gestures toward the dystopia in the reader’s own world. Un-doing of the bonds between shadow particles—the “dark materials” of the trilogy’s title—is the un-doing of conscious, human life. The old alchemists’ failure to consider the potential ramifications of their own curiosity leads Smith to reflect that Pullman’s narrative “goes beyond the fact of entry by posing the questions: what are the *consequences* of creating portals?” (143). As devastating as these consequences are, they are not fully revealed until the last chapters of *The Amber Spyglass*, in which Will and Lyra learn that each cut of Will’s subtle knife has brought another life-destroying Specter into existence. He and Lyra have been directly complicit in the very evil they have struggled at such personal cost to combat. Despite their careful deliberation between possible spaces and

potential choices, their decisions to enter new worlds have contributed to the despair they had hoped to fight.

Yet if the Cittàgazze scientists' misplaced curiosity spells disaster for all worlds, Pullman's narrative nevertheless models the ethical engagement that discovery requires in the character of Mary Malone. Mary, who has turned to science to escape religion, is initially embarrassed by Lyra's description of Dust in distinctly moral terms. Disconcerted by Lyra's uncanny knowledge of dark matter and shadow particles, Mary asks, "D'you know how embarrassing it is to mention good and evil in a scientific laboratory?" (SK 85). Lyra, however, does not allow Mary the solace of academic neutrality. Instead, Lyra tells Mary that she "can't investigate Shadows, Dust, whatever it is, without thinking about that kind of thing, good and evil and such" (SK 85). Unlike her mother Mrs. Coulter, who shrinks from engaging with "big, difficult ideas" (GC 282), Lyra's journeys into new spaces have taught her that thinking about "good and evil and such" cannot occur in a vacuum, nor can she assume that her actions and decisions are the right ones. Lyra's presumptive confidence in Lord Asriel makes her responsible for Roger's death. For Will and Lyra, all decisions are moral choices requiring thoughtful reflection, which they cultivate through deciding when and how to use the alethiometer and subtle knife.<sup>30</sup>

Like Lyra and Will, Mary also practices mental flexibility in her readings of the I-Ching and her later creation of the amber spyglass that allows her to see Dust in the world of the *mulefa*. Mary epitomizes Keats' principle of 'negative capability.' She is "capable of

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<sup>30</sup> When he repairs Will's knife, Iorek warns Lyra and Will that they are using an inscrutable and dangerous instrument: "I have never known anything so dangerous. The most deadly fighting machines are little toys compared to that knife; the harm it can do is unlimited" (AS 180-181). Similarly, Lyra's subsequent reading of the alethiometer presents her with a paradox of traveling to the world of the dead. "It said the knife would be the death of Dust, but then it said it was the only way to keep Dust alive" (AS 183).

being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason” (Keats 91). In reading this phrase to Lyra, Mary suggests the kinds of capacities and strengths that both young protagonists will need as they journey forward. The spaces of uncertainty and doubt in which they find themselves will not adhere to the rules—the facts or reasons that govern the normal. To be negatively capable, Lyra and Will must reject the absolute certitude epitomized by Lord Asriel’s rebellion and the Magisterium. Instead, their strength will come from their openness to the unknown and unfamiliar “spaces of possibles.” Moreover, Pullman’s direct allusions to Keats in *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass* indicate the degree to which he expects his readers to practice the same mental flexibility his protagonists learn. Pullman remarks that “I pay my readers the compliment of assuming they are intellectually adventurous” (“Achuka Interview” Answer 8). The repeated emphasis on intellectual and emotional elasticity underscores the ways in which space (understood here as the space of growth and maturity) functions in the trilogy. If Will and Lyra begin the trilogy as pre-teenagers—more children than adolescents—who are sure of themselves and their respective questions, their gradual development of the ability to accept uncertainty and doubt and their capacity to act despite those doubts, marks their transition into awareness, experience and maturity.

### **The World of the *Mulefa*: “Its not *them*, they’re *us*”**

In her role as a foil to Mrs. Coulter, Mary occupies the tempter position of “serpent” (SK 221), which Pullman rewrites as a benevolent symbol of wisdom. If the icy Mrs. Coulter is the *femme fatale* who entices children with glamour and sweets in the tradition of C.S. Lewis’ White Witch,<sup>31</sup> Mary’s tolerance for mystery and ambiguity situates her in the role of

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<sup>31</sup> Pullman is famous for his frequent denunciations of C.S. Lewis *Chronicles of Narnia* as “pernicious” (Parsons and Nicholson 131). Pullman’s most-cited attack on Lewis is his article, “The dark side of Narnia”



wisdom-seeker and mentor to Lyra's nascent sexuality. Her discovery of the window in the air, "the square patch of difference" (AS 82), allows her to see "the absolute difference between *this* and *that*" (AS 82, italics orig.). For Mary, this space is not a cause for colonization or conquest, as typified by Pullman's malevolent priest, Father Gomez.<sup>32</sup> Rather, Mary understands her journey as an opportunity to re-learn what it means to be "other." As Mary works with the peaceable, diamond-shaped animals called *mulefa*, she experiences "an adjustment being made in her mind, as the word *creatures* became the word *people*. These beings weren't human, but they were *people*, she told herself; it's not *them*, they're *us*" (AS 123). This shift from "them" to "us" implicates Mary as a member of the *mulefa*'s world and her responsibility to their community. Mary's adjustment to her new space is interspersed with Lyra's compassionate rescue of the ghosts in the world of the dead, such that Iorek's earlier instructions, "Be prepared for strangeness and new ways, my bears" (AS 114), could just as well be addressed to Mary, Will, and Lyra as to Pullman's reader. These shifts to *us*-oriented ways of thinking and behaving underscore Pullman's insistence that his readers come away from the text better prepared to meet those with whom they share their own world spaces and without whom the republic of heaven cannot be built.

Cooperation—like Pullman's ethic of cheerfulness—is not an option. In his essay, "The

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that appeared in the British newspaper, *The Guardian* (1 Oct. 1998): 6-7, a critique which he reprises in his Achuka Interview (Answers 2-3). Lauren Shohet's essay "Reading Dark Materials" in Millicent Lenz and Carole Scott's *His Dark Materials Illuminated* (2005) demonstrates the ways Pullman's narrative subverts Lewis' narrative. Shohet writes that "[u]nlike Lewis's novels, which obediently parrot—however charmingly—their canonical sources, Pullman's narrative lies, steals, and transforms" (25). Pullman's protestations have not, however, stopped a number of critics from pointing out similarities between his work and that of Lewis. See William Gray's "Pullman, Lewis, MacDonald, and the Anxiety of Influence" in *Mythlore* 25.3-4 (2007): 117-132, Naomi Woods' essay, "Paradise Lost and Found: Obedience, Disobedience, and Storytelling in C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman" in *Children's Literature in Education* 32.4 (2001): 237-259, and Stephanie Pausell's "Stories to live by: The fantasy worlds of Pullman and Lewis" in *The Christian Century* 15 Jan. 2008: 11-12.

<sup>32</sup> Father Gomez's approach to the *mulefa* recapitulates nineteenth-century imperialist attitudes: "The first thing he would do here would be to convince the four-legged creatures, who seemed to have the rudiments of reason, that their habit of riding on wheels was abominable and Satanic, and contrary to the will of God. Break them of that, and salvation would follow" (AS 464).

Republic of Heaven,” Pullman elaborates on the necessity of cheerfulness as a corollary to knowledge and experience: “we must be cheerful ...It’s difficult sometimes, but good will is not a luxury: it’s an absolute necessity. It’s a moral imperative” (667). Given the indifference that plagues our own world, Pullman’s message to readers is that we cannot wait for a hero like Lyra or a Will to construct such a republic in our stead. Living fully and living responsibly require engagement with the world *as it is*.

It is no accident that constructing this republic also requires a restoration of physical or geographical space. Like the other endangered worlds in *His Dark Materials*, the world space of the *mulefa* is also dying. Mary finds herself in a world that is both threatened by attacks of monstrous white birds known as *tulapi* and the leakage of *sraf* (the *mulefa* word for Dust) from the atmosphere. Recognizing Mary’s negative capability (“You can see connections and possibilities and alternatives that are invisible to us” [AS 234]), the *mulefa* charge her with restoring the balance to their ecosystem. Mary’s alternative knowledge allows her to discover that the world around her is alive. Space itself and everything in it is as conscious and sentient as she and the *mulefa* are. Moreover, she realizes that the leakage of *sraf*/Dust out of the *mulefa*’s world is in fact a desperate attempt on the part of living matter to save itself. What looks like incomprehensible self-destruction at first glance is actually environmental self-sacrifice of cosmic proportions. Gazing at the sky, Mary sees a world in motion:

wind, moon, clouds, leaves, grass, all those lovely things were crying out and hurling themselves into the struggle to keep the shadow particles in this universe, which they so enriched. Matter *loved* Dust. It didn’t want to see it go.... (AS 452)

This emphasis on the physically tangible and the material recurs throughout the trilogy, affirming the physical senses over the abstract or the purely spiritual.<sup>33</sup> By giving consciousness to all living things “defying dark with leaf and twig and fruit and flower” (AS 391), and placing all of nature at the service of Lyra and Will, who must save all spaces, Pullman recalls the Romantic concept of nature as a reflection of moral goodness writ large.<sup>34</sup> Because the narrative focalizes environmental disaster through the eyes of admirable characters like Serafina Pekkala, who are “heartsick” (AS 37) at the devastation they see, Pullman guides his readers towards a sympathetic response to the fragile ecosystems in their own. Like the spaces within the narrative, the spaces outside the text—places of extreme poverty, the melting arctic ice caps, disappearing rainforests, and polluted cities—require that readers of *His Dark Materials* choose to act to restore the dystopias of their own dying planet.

As if to underscore the ways in which the reader’s space also depends on consciousness, curiosity and engagement, the depiction of abject, abysmal spaces within the narrative dramatizes the consequences of inaction. The world of the dead, the abyss, and Lord Asriel’s republic all negate Dust, and with it the capacity for hope and renewal. A brief glimpse of hell reveals that it is “the end of all places and the last of all worlds” (AS 10).

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<sup>33</sup> Ruta Skadi’s sensation of flying celebrates the physical, tangible world: “[S]he rejoiced in her blood and flesh, in the rough pine bark she felt next to her skin, in the beat of her heart and the life of all her senses, and in the hunger she was feeling now, and in the presence of her sweet-voiced bluethroat dæmon, and in the earth below her...” (SK 125).

<sup>34</sup> In his “Defense of Poetry” (1821), Percy Bysshe Shelley maintained that “there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of sounds and motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them” (300). For a reading of Shelley in the context of Pullman, see Millicent Lenz’s reading of Shelley’s “sympathetic imagination,” in her article, “Story as a Bridge to Transformation: The Way Beyond Death in Philip Pullman’s *The Amber Spyglass*” in *Children’s Literature in Education* 34.1 (2003): 47-55. For a brief exploration of the traces of German and English Romanticism in *His Dark Materials*, see William Gray’s article, “Pullman, Lewis, MacDonald and the Anxiety of Influence” in *Mythlore* 25.3-4 (2007): 117-132.

This same barrenness is a feature of Lord Asriel's republic, a world that is "[e]mpty of conscious life" (AS 210). Despite its sulfur lakes, basalt fortresses and adamantine towers that allude to the rebellion of Milton's Satan, the absence of consciousness in this world means that it is destined to fail.

Similarly, the abyss that opens between the worlds during the Authority's battle against Lord Asriel is "a vast black emptiness, like a shaft into the deepest darkness. The golden light flowed into it and died" (AS 355). The abyss is not a world at all, but a black hole, whose infinite absence is more terrifying to Will, Lyra and the ghosts they rescue than the "prison camp" (AS 33) and the "wasteland" (AS 316) they leave behind in the world of the dead. Because this space provides no exit, it is infinitely more dangerous than the previous dystopias in the trilogy. This negative space arrests and denies the "memory and wakefulness" (AS 224) necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and experience, and the void's existence, along with the cuts made by the subtle knife, threatens the survival of all other worlds. Unlike the marvelous portals of typical travel in young adult fantasy literature (Smith 143), these yawning depths cause the loss of Dust, energy, creativity and knowledge. Because they negate the transition from innocence to experience, these abject spaces of absolute absence and loss constitute the most menacing portion of Lyra and Will's quest. Unlike Cittágazze and Bolvangar, where resistance and action remain possible, these voids signal the end of action, choice and possibility.

Restoring these dying world spaces is the last portion of Will and Lyra's joint quest. Their first experience of sexual intimacy in the last volume acts as a *felix culpa*, a happy fall into sexual experience that rescues all worlds from the oblivion of "brutish automatism" (AS 451). At the same time, the acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and consciousness that

transforms them into “living gold” of humanity’s “inheritance” (AS 470) forces both adolescents to confront the painful realization that they must each build the republic of heaven in their own worlds because “there is no elsewhere” (AS 363). Despite all the myriad alternate spaces to which they have traveled and the fantastic beings who have accompanied them, Lyra and Will’s sexual maturity marks the necessity of learning to live full lives, lives they cannot live in worlds other than their own.

## **Conclusion**

The return to place from the space of multiple worlds, then, is by necessity anticlimactic. Despite their extraordinary journeys and sacrifices, Will and Lyra’s respective worlds have not changed for the better. Difference, disorder and dystopia remain. Will and Mary exit Oxford’s Botanic Garden to face the forms, regulations and bureaucracy of the British legal and health care systems. In Lyra’s world, the weakened Magisterium still holds political sway, but rather than combating it, she contemplates her future in a girls’ boarding school. For some readers, this return to ordinary place signals a defeat that is potentially “suffisamment inattendue, voire inacceptable ” (Besson 140).<sup>35</sup> Falconer concurs, and points out that Pullman’s deliberate enclosure of Will and Lyra and “the multiple, spacious worlds” (94) of their quest reverses Milton’s original trajectory in *Paradise Lost* (94). Milton’s Adam and Eve transition from innocent enclosure to hopeful exposure in which “[t]he world was all before them” (XII.646). Lyra and Will, however, move back into the limited dystopic and dis-ordered places they left behind (Falconer 94). A reader may well ask what good are Lyra and Will’s bravery, growth, and struggle if their quest ends in closing off the very spaces that allowed for their miraculous journey. Why argue that space is necessary and important if

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<sup>35</sup> Translation: “sufficiently unexpected, even unacceptable.”

Pullman's heroes like his readers must cheerfully submit to the destiny of necessary separation?<sup>36</sup>

As harsh and unyielding—and as Gooderham and Moruzi argue, as artificial and contrived as Pullman's ending might appear—the closing off of space at the end of the trilogy signifies Lyra and Will's ability to act on behalf of others, rather than themselves. Closing off the myriad worlds and spaces so that they “would lie over each other again, like transparent images on two sheets of film...” (AS 503) to maintain life differs from the dystopic and abject spaces that deny it. Falconer herself concludes that given the environmental dystopia in our own world, “we *do* need to recognize the world as a finite space with limited resources, which somehow we have to inhabit responsibly” (94). It is precisely because their worlds have *not* changed that Will and Lyra's separation is necessary. Will and Lyra's painful departure from the Botanic Garden reconfigures Adam and Eve's departure from Paradise as a necessary step towards maturity and wisdom as well as the wisdom they will foster in others.

The choice to be cheerful and to build the republic of heaven in Lyra's and Will's own worlds is Pullman's deliberate play on Kleist's concept of the acquisition of grace and wisdom through hard work and experience. Pullman originally evokes Kleist when Lyra fences unsuccessfully with the armoured bear Iorek Byrnison in *The Golden Compass*. Here, Pullman returns to Kleist as a way to reflect on the meaning of growing up and life after the end of innocence. In Kleist's story, the fictional interlocutor tells the narrator that “[p]aradise is locked and bolted, and the cherubim stands behind us. We have to go on and make the

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<sup>36</sup> Cheerfulness is a key concept of Pullman's didactics that signals willingness to bear hardship for the sake of a greater good. The angel Balthamos promises to help Will “cheerfully” (AS 94); Lyra puts on a “cheerful” face for Roger's ghost (AS 306). Will and Lyra both emphasize cheerfulness despite the pain of their separation (AS 509 and AS 518 ). See also Pullman's essay, “The Republic of Heaven” cited earlier.

journey round the world to see if it is perhaps open somewhere at the back” (202). Like Kleist’s original characters, Pullman is also interested in interrogating the concept of the return to paradise. Pullman’s narrative, however, posits that contemplating such a return is mis-placed. As his angel Xaphania points out finding this back door is *not* Will and Lyra’s task (AS 495). Instead, living means choosing the “spaces of possibles” in which they will tell true stories, and accepting the ambiguity and mystery of all the phases and spaces that remain beyond their reach.

Besson and Falconer concur, noting that such an ending may appear tragic, but it is not without hope. Besson explains: “le dénouement n’est pas si désespéré que des lecteurs déçus ont pu le percevoir” (141).<sup>37</sup> Rewriting Adam and Eve’s departure from the garden of Eden allows Pullman to critique the ways in which fairy tale endings are insidious fantasy in their own right. The enclosed, protected spaces—those metaphorical gardens of “happily ever after”—are the very “lies and fantasies” (AS 317) that so incite the harpies’ rage. The moment of *anagnorisis* and restoration common to the romance genre and with which fantasy is frequently allied, presumes that work and struggle of the quest are complete.<sup>38</sup> Rather, Will and Lyra understand that bringing the republic of heaven into existence is not a single quest but an on-going task, since “where we are is always the most important place” (AS 518). Real places, the ones which Pullman insists that readers also face at the end of *His Dark Materials*, cannot survive without stories of the spaces they could one day become. But the tellers of those stories must ground themselves in reality rather than dreams. Our worlds and our spaces need our strength, curiosity, patience, and wisdom no less than Lyra’s

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<sup>37</sup> Translation: “The denouement is not as hopeless as disappointed readers might have perceived.”

<sup>38</sup> See Warner’s comment that “metamorphosis play[s] a crucial part in anagnorisis, or recognition, the reversal fundamental to narrative form and so govern[s] narrative satisfaction” (19).

and Will's worlds do. Our own stories—the ones we tell about the spaces and places where we have lived and worked and traveled—are too important not to be true.



## Chapter Four

### “Il suffit de faire la bonne”<sup>1</sup>

#### Choice, Space, and Place in Pierre Bottero’s *Ewilan* Cycle

##### Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that Pierre Bottero’s *Ewilan* cycle—which includes the two trilogies, *La Quête d’Ewilan* and *Les Mondes d’Ewilan*<sup>2</sup>—offers readers the opportunity to reflect on space as a means of choice. Whereas the regulatory places of school and home tend not to offer adolescents much freedom, I interpret Bottero’s *Ewilan* series as following Pullman’s trilogy by insisting on the ethics of choice. Through her forays into the unseen realm of the Imagination, Camille/Ewilan must choose her own way within the worlds she enters, no less than Pullman’s Lyra. By metaphorizing adolescents’ emotional growth as a choice to remain in place or to move forward into new spaces, Bottero’s narrative asks readers to reflect on how their choice of space—and the choices they make within those spaces—are paramount to the kinds of young adults they will become.

By comparing Bottero’s *Ewilan* narrative to those of Rowling, L’Homme, and Pullman, I maintain that Bottero follows the familiar model of the heroic fantasy narrative, in which a young heroine, accompanied by a group of faithful companions, must undertake a dangerous

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “It is enough to make the good one.” This title refers to part of a quotation from Ewilan’s friend, Maniel, the entirety of which reads, “On a toujours le choix. Toujours. Il suffit de faire la bonne” (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 329). I will return to this quotation in my conclusion.

<sup>2</sup> Bottero’s first trilogy is comprised of *D’un monde à l’autre*, *Les Frontières de Glace* and *L’Île du Destin*; his second is divided into the following volumes, *La Forêt des Captifs*, *L’Oeil d’Otolep* and *Les Tentacules du Mal*.

journey to battle evil and learn of her true origins. The dystopic places in Bottero's fantastic multiverse confirm that all worlds (real and imaginary) are very much in jeopardy. As a result, his protagonist Camille Duciel (whose name is Ewilan Gil' Sayan in the fantastic space of Gwendalavir) learns that although the choice of place is not always her own, she does have the ability to decide how she will live and act within the threatening places to which she travels. Moreover, by investing his heroine with a destiny she can neither ignore nor escape, Bottero's quest narrative posits that space and the choices Camille/Ewilan is forced to make in these spaces—exert a physical as well as mental cost. Like Bottero's heroine, readers must also decide what the “good” choice is, especially when the spaces and places in which those choices occur offer no easy solutions or painless options.

### **The Quest for Space**

In the introduction, we noted Bottero's own insistence on the necessity of space in which he explained that “[p]our créer un monde imaginaire, il faut de l'espace” (*Le Télégramme* par 3).<sup>3</sup> In perhaps the most practical sense, Bottero is talking about page space. In an interview at the yearly Salon du Livre de Montreuil in 2007, Bottero spoke in similar terms, noting that: “écrire la fantasy, créer un monde cohérent...offrant une vraie dimension géographique, politique, économique exige de l'espace, des pages. Beaucoup de pages” (Question 4 elbakin.net).<sup>4</sup> New world spaces and the places within them require elaboration. A writer must create plausible explanations for the existence of new geographies and fantastic landscapes, in which the physical laws that govern the reader's own world do not apply. Writers like Bottero, Pullman, L'Homme, and Rowling need the space of multiple volumes in order for to create

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<sup>3</sup> Translation: “to create an imaginary world, it is necessary to have space.”

<sup>4</sup> Translation: “to write fantasy, to create a coherent world...offering true geographical, political and economic dimensions requires space—pages of it. Lots of pages.”

complex multiverses for their protagonists and readers to enter. As a narrative construct, this elaboration is especially necessary when the protagonists (like Bottero's Camille, Rowling's Harry or Pullman's Lyra and Will) have no prior knowledge of the new spaces in which they find themselves. Like the reader, all of these protagonists enter worlds that defy their previous understanding and conceptions of space. They all need the page space that narrative description provides in order to orient themselves within these worlds and learn the new rules that govern their existence.

Not surprisingly, Bottero's young adult readers have responded positively to the alternative spaces in his books. In a round-table interview with readers aged 12 to 19, the French journal *Lecture Jeune* reported young adults' enthusiasm for Bottero's fictional world, known as L'Autre Monde (The Other World) and the empire of Gwendalavir within its borders. A student named Émilie reported a sense of enchantment: "j'étais intriguée par l'histoire de cette fille propulsée dans un monde parallèle" ("Nous sommes éveillés!" 12).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, an adolescent named Angelina noted how much she enjoyed exploring the space of Bottero's Other World along with his characters: "Ce qui m'a plu, c'est le pays imaginaire. C'est un univers totalement différent du nôtre" (13).<sup>6</sup> Émilie and Angelina are not alone. According to a 2008 study by Bottero's publisher, Rageot, *La Quête d'Ewilan* sold at least 52,900 copies with its sequel *Les Mondes D'Ewilan* selling 330,000 copies since the series' beginning in 2003.<sup>7</sup> Such numbers are enough to make other young adults as well as librarians, teachers, and scholars take notice.

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<sup>5</sup> Translation: "I was intrigued by the story of this girl thrown into a parallel world."

<sup>6</sup> Translation: "What I liked the most was the imaginary country. It's a universe totally different from our own."

<sup>7</sup> For statistics, see the article "Nous sommes éveillés! Les lecteurs de Pierre Bottero" in *Lecture Jeune* 131 (2009): p. 12, note one. It is also helpful to note that sales of Bottero's third trilogy, *Le Pacte des Marchombres* (2006-2008) which is based on a character from the *Ewilan* series, has also contributed to Bottero's popularity and to the sales figures noted here. Although this third trilogy takes place in Bottero's Other World, I have chosen to focus this chapter on the *Ewilan* cycle alone, given the demands of clarity and space in this project.

Gilles Béhotéguy of l'Université Montesquieu Bordeaux IV, for instance, writes that the success of these trilogies “ont imposé Pierre Bottero comme écrivain français de *fantasy* pour la jeunesse” (21).<sup>8</sup>

Yet the page space that Bottero evokes regarding his multivolume series is a reductive answer to a larger issue: why are the fantastic spaces in his texts such a salient means of engaging French young adults?<sup>9</sup> The French science fiction writer, Christian Grenier, author of the apologist *La S-F: La Science-Fiction à l'usage de ceux qui ne l'aiment pas* (2003), poses the same question. “Pourquoi,” she inquires, “au XXe siècle, se tourne-t-on avec une telle passion vers l'espace?” (39).<sup>10</sup> For Grenier as for Bottero, the multiverses in young adult fantasy narratives offer spaces in which dreams of the unknown can still occur. Even as technological advancements have brought so many previously unattainable spaces (from the moon to subatomic particles) within our grasp, our desire to imagine new spaces continues apace. Grenier understands that the explosion of fantastic, fictional spaces in literature are not compensatory, insofar as we might turn to fantasy to seek what we have lost. The new and ‘other’ spaces authors continue to imagine not only offer readers choices that do not exist in their own world, but which are at the same time indicative of the continued desire for exploration. Such “exploration” is less a colonial enterprise than an expression of on-going curiosity to seek out the unknown and to learn about oneself through such a search. Grenier explains that:

Une fois le rêve accompli et l'espace apprivoisé, l'imaginaire des auteurs [tourne]

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<sup>8</sup> Translation: “have imposed Pierre Bottero as *the* French writer of fantasy for youth.”

<sup>9</sup> By focusing on French readers, my goal is not national exclusivity. According to Bottero's editor Caroline Westberg, Bottero's trilogies have been translated into eight languages, including Korean, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, Czech, and Turkish (“Rencontre avec Rageot Editeur” Question 15).

<sup>10</sup> Translation: “Why in the 20<sup>th</sup> century do we turn with such passion towards space?” The translated title of Grenier's text is *S-F: Science Fiction for those who dislike it*. To the best of my knowledge, Grenier's text has not been translated into English.

vers d'autres objectifs: de nouveaux espaces ou des espaces intérieurs. (40)<sup>11</sup>

Grenier's hypothesis, that fictional world spaces work in tandem with the inner journey of self-discovery, is consonant with Deidre F. Baker's astute remark that "[f]antasy journeys take place in a landscape, whether physical or emotional, literal or figurative—or most likely all four" (238). In both *Ewilan* trilogies, the dual "landscapes" of the characters' physical surroundings and their emotional spaces are both important components of the narrative. Physical spaces provide the backdrop for the fabulous battles in the tradition of *Dungeons and Dragons* and remind the reader of the decidedly fantastic nature of the narrative.<sup>12</sup> Interior, psychological and emotional spaces serve to remind readers that even as the story is fantastic, characters' thoughts and reactions remain within the realm of the realistic and psychologically plausible. Since Bottero focalizes the narrative primarily through the eyes of his heroine, Camille/Ewilan, her thoughts and reactions function as the means by which the narrative connects to the emotional veracity of what it means to be an adolescent.

Throughout Bottero's cycle, Camille/Ewilan and her companions travel through vastly different spaces, including dangerous mountains, wild prairies, and impenetrable forests. Ultimately, however, these spaces are secondary to character development. Bottero insists that it is the human element which draws readers to his texts, not the fantastic monsters, countries, or superhuman talents with which he invests his protagonists:

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<sup>11</sup> Translation: "Once the dream [of space travel] has been realized and space made familiar, authors' imaginations turn towards other objectives: new spaces or interior spaces."

<sup>12</sup> Bottero frequently cites the role-playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* as having a seminal effect on his stories: "Étudiant, j'ai découvert les jeux de rôles, dont *Donjons et Dragons*, et cela a contribué à ma 'formation' d'écrivain. En effet, en tant que maître du jeu, je dirigeais les joueurs, prenant plaisir à les mettre en scène. Tout reposait sur mon imagination" ("Recontre avec Pierre Bottero" 8). /Translation: "As a student, I discovered role-playing games, among them *Dungeons and Dragons*, and that contributed to my 'education' as a writer. In effect, as game master, I directed the players, taking pleasure in putting them into action. Everything was based on my imagination."

Je pense que la clef, c'est l'humain, que ce soit dans un cadre réaliste ou fantastique. Les personnages véhiculent les émotions, vient ensuite l'habillage, qu'il s'agisse d'un univers de banlieue ou d'un monde imaginaire. ("Rencontre avec Pierre Bottero" 9)<sup>13</sup>

Bottero's assertion of the primacy of human emotions is reminiscent of Philip Pullman's own insistence on the importance of psychological realism of *His Dark Materials*.<sup>14</sup> Bottero explains that: "Écrire la *fantasy*, c'est avancer avec son personnage, lui faire emprunter un chemin et découvrir qu'il peut aller toujours au-delà" ("Rencontre avec Pierre Bottero" 9).<sup>15</sup> As Bottero's use of the word *chemin* (pathway) suggests, the decision to choose one's path, and by extension, the decision not to choose others, is the work of his heroine, Camille/Ewilan, just as it is for Pullman's Lyra and Will.<sup>16</sup> Deciding if and how to traverse space functions a *liet-motif* of Bottero's narrative.<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that Camille/Ewilan's quests resemble the basic structure of the young adult fantasy narrative: she escapes the fictional version of the "real" world and miraculously finds herself in her original world, where she discovers her powerful, magical talent of "design." In both cycles, Camille/Ewilan's gift allows her to rescue her true parents and to save her new world from the forces that threaten it with extinction. Although most her quests are imposed upon her by adults, I maintain that Camille/Ewilan's choices within these spaces highlights the ways in which she constructs her agency and freedom.

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<sup>13</sup> Translation: "I think that the key is the human, whether the frame is realistic or fantastic. The characters transmit emotions, next comes the dressing, whether one is concerned with an outskirts of a city or an imaginary world."

<sup>14</sup> See Pullman's assertion of the "stark realism" (Parsons and Nicholson 131) of *His Dark Materials*, discussed in chapter three, footnote five.

<sup>15</sup> Translation: "Writing fantasy is to advance one's character, make that person take a pathway and discover that he can still travel beyond it."

<sup>16</sup> See my discussion of choice in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* in chapter three.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, in *Les Frontières de Glace*, Camille/Ewilan is ordered to escape as a hord of Raïs monsters attacks her group. Knowing that her friend Salim remains behind, Camille/Ewilan refuses to flee: "Non! hurla-t-elle. Je ne quitte pas Salim. S'il doit être rattrapé, je reste avec lui" (91). Translation: "No! she shouted. "I'm not leaving Salim. If he gets caught, I am staying with him."

## Escape from Reality

Part of what young adult readers appreciate in Bottero's series is his ability to engage emotionally with Camille Duciel (later known as in Gwendalavir as Ewilan) and her friend, Salim Condo, in the fictional version of modern-day France.<sup>18</sup> The pair's shared sense of boredom and isolation at home and at school suggests that his characters' "real" world is a physical and emotional prison, in which they have no space to make choices of their own. Camille's home in the wealthy district of the city is a place apart, surrounded by walls, infrared lights, and guard dogs. Her sense of place is defined by the barriers that physically distance her from the rest of the city. Bottero's description of Camille's neighborhood combines wealth with isolation:

les quartiers cossus de la ville, maisons majestueuses, piscines luxueuses, clôtures en fer forgé. Camille habitait une des plus belles demeures, au cœur d'un jardin ceint de hauts murs. (*D'un monde à l'autre* 27)<sup>19</sup>

Like the physical barriers that mark her home, Camille feels as invisible and as cut-off from her adoptive parents, Monsieur and Madame Duciel, as many adolescent readers may feel from their own families. Camille's lack of choice at the Duciel's home confirms Anne Besson's argument that young adult protagonists in fantasy narratives "se savent étrangers au terne quotidien dans lequel ils ont vu le jour" ("L'exploration" 132).<sup>20</sup> As Camille tells Salim, "du moment où je rapporte de bons bulletins et je me tiens bien à table, [mes parents] se fichent complètement de

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<sup>18</sup> See for example one young adult reader's comment that "Je pense que Bottero parvient à mettre des mots sur ce qu'on a toujours ressenti" (13), and another reader's concurring opinion: "Quand on est adolescent, on se cherche et Bottero a mis des mots sur ce que nous sommes" (14) in "Nous sommes éveillés! Rencontre avec les lecteurs de Pierre Bottero" in *Lecture Jeune* 131 (2009): 12-16. Translation: "I think that Bottero is able to put into words what we have always felt"; "When you are an adolescent, you search for yourself, and Bottero has put into words what we are."

<sup>19</sup> Translation: "the moneyed quarters of the city, majestic houses, luxurious pools, wrought-iron fences. Camille lived in one of the nicest houses, at the heart of a garden surrounded by high walls."

<sup>20</sup> Translation: "know themselves to be strangers to the dull, daily existence from which they come."

ce que je fais!” (*D’un monde à l’autre* 20).<sup>21</sup> Camille’s assessment of her adoptive parents may indeed ring true for adolescent readers, who may feel that their own parents are more concerned with their schoolwork and outward behavior than with their inner struggles and quandaries. As a place, Camille’s house is a gilded prison, in which her choices result in punitive action from her adoptive parents. When she returns home late, skips class, and pursues her friendship with Salim, the son of Cameroonian immigrants, her parents’ coldness matches the Dursleys’ distaste for Harry in Rowling’s series.

In the same vein as Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter’s disavowals of their daughter Lyra in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*,<sup>22</sup> Camille’s adoptive parents do not disguise their lack of affection for her. Their rejection of her is as chilling as it is formal, signaled by the pronoun “vous” (“you”) with which they address her:

vous êtes étrange, incompréhensible....Nous voulions un enfant identique à celui que nous aurions pu avoir, et nous vous avons eue, vous, Camille, plus différente que tous les étrangers de la Terre! (*L’Île du Destin* 152-153)<sup>23</sup>

Like the wall that surrounds their house, the coldness of the Duciel’s response is an emotional barrier to the affection and love which any adolescent needs to grow and mature. The Duciel’s reaction to Camille’s difference reminds readers of the Dursleys’ similar rejection of Harry, with the effect that both episodes incite the reader’s rage and sympathy. Bottero follows Rowling in

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<sup>21</sup> Translation: “the minute I bring home a good report card and behave well at the dinner table, [my parents] absolutely don’t give a damn what I do.”

<sup>22</sup> See Mrs. Coulter’s rejection of Lyra: “Then take her and welcome....She’s too coarse, too stubborn” (*GC* 395) or Lord Asriel’s similar distancing exclamation that “The fuss she’s caused is out of proportion to her merits” (*AS* 199).

<sup>23</sup> Translation: “you are strange, incomprehensible....We wanted a child identical to the one we would have been able to have, and we got you, Camille, more different than all the strangers on Earth!”



positioning Camille in the familiar role of the unhappy orphan, who must choose to carve out her own identity in the unknown spaces to come rather than within the familiar place of home.<sup>24</sup>

In the final volume of the first series, *L'Île au Destin*, the Duciels—who value normalcy and *comme-il-faut* formality no less than Rowling's Dursleys—finally admit their knowledge of Camille's origins in a parallel world. Their revelation positions the Duciels as unwilling and unable to accept the idea that the space in which they live has multiple dimensions. If Rowling's Dursleys are forced to admit the existence of the wizarding world *The Order of the Phoenix*, the Duciels' mental inflexibility highlights the narrative and emotional necessity of Camille's choice to seek her life in a new world space of L'Autre Monde.<sup>25</sup>

Just as high walls around Camille's residence illustrate how her home is a place to be escaped rather than cherished, her friend Salim's apartment building is geographically isolated from the city, both by its height and its lower-class status as an as an H.L.M.).<sup>26</sup> Salim describes his own upbringing in an over-crowded urban housing development as lacking the attention, love, and guidance he needed:

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<sup>24</sup> In her *Introduction de la littérature de jeunesse* (Paris: Didier Jeunesse, 2009), Isabelle Nières-Chevrel writes that “[d]ans le roman de jeunesse, l'autonomie suprême, c'est d'être orphelin” (169). Translation: “in the young adult novel, supreme autonomy is being an orphan.” Moreover, she also notes that the narrative device of the orphan is not meant to be as tragic as it is liberating to characters and readers (169). Her reading corresponds with Philippe Clermont's assertion that from a narrative point of view, the orphaned protagonist is “la condition du début de l'apprentissage: il rend le personnage vraisemblable en l'humanisant, provoque un manque affectif qui le prépare à rencontrer un parent de substitution (son mentor) et facilite son départ vers l'aventure de l'autre monde, car peu d'attaches le retiennent” (187). / Translation: “the condition of the beginning of apprenticeship: [being an orphan] makes the character verisimilar by humanizing him and provokes an affective absence that prepares the orphan to meet a substitute parent (his mentor), and facilitates his departure for adventure in the other world since few attachments hold him back.” Both Nières-Chevrel and Clermont point to the Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* as a model for the narrative of the orphan's adventures.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the Dursleys' reaction to the arrival of dementors at Privet Drive in *Little Whinging*, and Petunia Dursely's admission that she is aware of the wizarding world, see chapter 1.

<sup>26</sup> Unlike in an American city, Salim does not live in the inner-city but on its outskirts. In France, less economically stable areas are positioned outside city limits rather than within them. An H.L.M. is the French abbreviation for *habitations à loyer modéré*, or buildings that provide low-rent housing, usually to immigrant populations.

C'est là que j'ai grandi au dix-septième étage de cet immeuble....Je n'ai pas reçu de coups mais pas de tendresse non plus. En fait, personne ne s'est jamais vraiment occupé de moi....Alors j'ai appris à me débrouiller. À courir vite. (*L'Île du Destin* 123)<sup>27</sup>

Like Pullman's Will Parry, who acts alone in his father's absence, Bottero's Salim eschews self-pity. The lack of space in Salim's tiny apartment teaches him to choose autonomy and self-reliance as his *modus operandi*. Like Will, he also learns to move through spaces of his building unseen and unnoticed. By situating his protagonists in places that have no need of their presence, places in which they are unwanted, ignored and uncared for, Bottero's fictional version of the reader's world is a place that requires evasion. Readers of young adult fantasy will recognize this device as similar to the ways that Rowling's Harry must escape his claustrophobic place at the Dursleys' house in the *Harry Potter* series. As readers learn, the wizarding world needs Harry to combat the rise of Lord Voldemort no less than Bottero's empire of Gwendalavir needs Ewilan for its survival.

### **Mapping the Other World**

For readers familiar with Erik L'Homme's series, *Le Livre des Étoiles*, Bottero's opening strategy of the map of his new world is a familiar one. Just as L'Homme opens each volume of his trilogy with maps of the mythical Pays d'Ys (the Realm of Ys) and le Monde Incertain (the Uncertain World), each volume of the *Ewilan* cycle charts the spaces and places of L'Autre Monde (the Other World) and the world beyond it. As Florence Plet-Nicolas points out, "[l]a Fantasy adore les cartes" (299).<sup>28</sup> Although many writers refer to Tolkien's Middle Earth as making cartography *de rigueur* for the fantasy narratives that followed *The Lord of the Rings*,

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<sup>27</sup> Translation: "That's where that I grew up on the seventeenth story of that building....I didn't get hit a lot, but there wasn't any tenderness either. In fact, nobody really ever looked out for me.... So I learned to survive. To run fast."

<sup>28</sup> Translation: "The Fantasy [genre] loves maps."

maps like Bottero's have a long history in children's and young adult literature.<sup>29</sup> For Benoît Virole, a French psychoanalyst and author of *L'enchantement Harry Potter ou la psychologie de l'enfant nouveau* (2001), "[l]'œuvre de Bottero est d'abord une géographie" (17)<sup>30</sup> in the sense that the unknown spaces of the island prime the reader for the story itself. Virole writes that space and place are crucial for the fantasy narrative:

[l]'histoire naît de la géographie. Donnons-nous un pays, cerné des mers inconnues, parcouru de chaînes de montagnes, de lacs et de gouffres, et nous avons déjà les partitions élémentaires d'où suriront les peuples en conflit... (17)<sup>31</sup>

These maps help Bottero's readers follow his characters' numerous trajectories and facilitate the reader's spatial orientation within the Other World. At the same time, the space that remains unvisited invites the reader's speculation and curiosity, because maps often show more spaces than an author is able to introduce within the narrative. For series authors like Bottero, this tactic deliberately encourages readers to read the following volume in hopes of discovering these additional spaces. Moreover, leaving some spaces undefined also engages readers' imaginations with what might exist within those mapped spaces that remain beyond the scope of the narrative.<sup>32</sup> The result of this "extra" space is that readers have the opportunity to explore their own inner spaces, given that the act of reading presumes self-reflection.

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<sup>29</sup> For an overview of maps in British and American children's and young adult fantasy, see Deidre F. Baker's survey in her article, "What We Found on Our Journey through Fantasy Land" in *Children's Literature in Education* 37 (2006): 237-251.

<sup>30</sup> Translation: "the work of Bottero is first and foremost a geography."

<sup>31</sup> Translation: "[t]he story is born from geography. Let's give ourselves a country, surrounded by unknown seas, covered by mountain chains, lakes and depths, and we already have the elementary parts from which will appear the peoples in conflict."

<sup>32</sup> The use of maps is foundational in fantasy novels, and has been a fascinating area of study, particularly for scholars of Tolkien. For a recent comparison of the intersections between medieval maps and current "map mania" in French fantasy bande-dessinée (graphic novel) tradition, see Florence Plet-Nicolas's article, "Quêtes Encartées. De la toponymie fantaisiste médiévale à la cartofantasy en BD" in *Fantasy, le merveilleux médiéval aujourd'hui* Ed. Anne Besson and Myriam White-Le Goff (Paris: Brangelonne/Essais, 2007).

Moreover, these undefined spaces on fantasy maps also give readers ample “room” or “space” to create their own fanfictions and stories that continue the narrative beyond the author’s ending. Noting “le développement des fanfictions sur Internet...” (18), Virole reminds readers that “Bottero a fourni aux adolescents non seulement le plaisir de la lecture, mais le cadre génératif de leur propre écriture” (18).<sup>33</sup> While the study of fanfictions (stories written by readers in order to continue a series after its original author ends the cycle) is outside the realm of this project, it is important to note that the “afterlife” of the series in this study continues apace, with online role-playing games, forums, and stories written and published by readers on the Internet.

### **Gwendalavir: The Space of the Quest**

As its title implies, Bottero’s first volume, *D’un monde à l’autre* (*From One World to The Other*), quickly posits an alternative parallel world to which his protagonist, Camille Duciél, travels. Thanks to her supernatural ability to perform a “step to the side” (“un pas sur le côté”), Camille suddenly finds herself in a semi-medieval empire of Gwendalavir, in which she and her real family have their origins. Just as Pullman’s Will Parry immediately recognizes that the “patch out of the air” (*SK* 13) is a parallel world, Camille reacts to her first movement through space with relative aplomb. Upon her return to France, she tells Salim, “je crois que je viens de passer dans un monde parallèle” (*D’un monde à l’autre* 17).<sup>34</sup> Camille’s entry into this new space becomes the impetus for the rest of the narrative, inciting her curiosity and fears, as well as the reader’s.

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<sup>33</sup> Translation: “The development of fanfictions on the Internet...” and “Bottero has not only furnished adolescents with the pleasure of reading but with the frame for generating their own writing.”

<sup>34</sup> Translation: “I think I just stepped into a parallel world.”

Like Harry Potter's arrival at Hogwarts, Camille's step into Gwendalavir gives her a sense of place and belonging. "Camille avait accepté le fait que ce monde était le sien. Elle le percevait dans toutes les fibres de son corps" (*D'un monde à l'autre* 137).<sup>35</sup> Although she has been separated from this world since she was a child and has no memory of it, Camille accepts her life in this new world with relative ease, as do others. Just as Harry's green eyes are reminders of his mother Lily, Camille's violet eyes immediately identify her as the daughter of a courageous noblewoman, Élicia Gil' Sayan. Camille's knowledge that she is at last in her original world, even as it remains a strange and dangerous place, responds to her deeply-held desire for a place of her own, a desire with which Bottero's young adult readers also identify.

Moreover, it is in Gwendalavir that Camille discovers her skill as a *dessinatrice* (or designer)—one who can mentally enter the alternate dimension of the Imagination to modify reality in ways that are unavailable to her companions.<sup>36</sup> Like Harry and his friends who use the spell "*Lumos!*" for light, Camille can also imagine light, and create objects that briefly become part of the visible world. If Rowling's mature wizards learn to travel by Apparition, Camille's ability to effect "*un pas sur le côté*" (or "a step to the side") allows her to travel between the worlds of modern-day France to Gwendalavir. Although using the Imagination is a talent which many share in Gwendalavir, Camille's abilities set her apart. She learns that her miraculous

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<sup>35</sup> Translation: "Camille had accepted that this world was her own. She felt it in every fiber of her body."

<sup>36</sup> The French verb, *dessiner*, means to draw or to outline. In Bottero's *Ewilan* cycle, the verb is used to indicate design or creation. The masculine noun, *dessinateur* and its feminine counterpart, *dessinatrice*, typically translate "artist" or "draftsman." In his analysis of young adult French fantasy series, Philippe Clermont notes that Bottero's system of magic is the most elaborate: "'Volonté, créativité et pouvoir' sont les trois composantes de ce don qu'on imagine sans peine être une métaphore de la création artistique. Formule prononcée, signe tracé, 'dessin' mental esquissé, ces trois systèmes ont en commun d'avoir un rapport au langage, oral ou écrit, rappelant implicitement que ces fictions sont avant tout des univers des mots" (194). / Translation: "'Will, Creativity and Power' are the three components of this gift, which one easily imagines to be a metaphor for artistic creation. Formula pronounced, sign traced, mental 'design' outlined, these three systems all have in common a relationship to oral or written language, an implicit reminder that these fictions are first and foremost universes of words."

power is greater than any other *dessinateur* or *dessinatrice* in the history of her Empire.<sup>37</sup>

Camille's ability to enter the mental realm of Imagination by opening herself to her gift resembles Lyra's equal facility reading the alethiometer in *His Dark Materials*.<sup>38</sup> Pullman's Lyra must mentally connect three different symbols in order to choose the next step in her journey. Likewise, Camille's ability to join her mind with others ("Elle tendit son esprit vers celui du Duom..." [*D'un monde à l'autre* 142])<sup>39</sup> and to open herself to the myriad possibilities of the Realm of the Imagination offers her an infinite series of choices about how her designs affect the space around her.

When she first meets her mentor, Duom Nil' Erg, Camille learns that the Imagination is a dimension of infinite paths that gives her access to a multiplicity of choices, which she will choose to modify the space around her. If Pullman's angel Xaphania defines the imagination as "a form of seeing....nothing like pretend" (AS 494), Duom Nil' Erg also makes a similar distinction between imagination-as-wish-fulfillment and Imagination as a mental dimension, which contains within it a series of choices and paths among which Camille will learn to choose. As Duom explains:

L'imagination, sans majuscule, est quelque chose de très personnel, la faculté de se représenter des choses qui n'existent pas en réalité. L'Imagination est une dimension, un univers, si tu préfères, mais immatériel, et les Spires sont les chemins qui parcourent cet univers. Il y a une infinité de chemins, une infinité de possibles, qu'ouvre le pouvoir du dessinateur. (*D'un monde à l'autre* 113)<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Philippe Clermont's comparison between Bottero's Ewilan and L'Homme's Guillemot: "Ewilan et Guillemot se distinguent par un don de la magie d'une force extraordinaire" (187). / Translation: "Ewilan and Guillemot distinguish themselves by a gift of magic of extraordinary force."

<sup>38</sup> See Lyra's explanation of reading the alethiometer to Farder Coram: "I just let my mind go clear and then it's sort of like looking down into water. You got to let your eyes find the right level because that's the only one that's in focus" (GC 174).

<sup>39</sup> Translation: "She strained her spirit towards that of Master Duom."

<sup>40</sup> Translation: "The imagination, without a capital I, is quite personal, the mental ability to represent for oneself that which does not exist in reality. The Imagination is a dimension, a universe, if you prefer, but immaterial, and

Like the “space of possibles” to which Pullman refers in the previous chapter, the Imagination offers Ewilan an infinite series of spaces and choices among which she will learn to negotiate. If Harry’s spells, Guillemot’s runic exclamations, Lyra’s alethiometer, and Will Parry’s subtle knife all grant them the power to affect the spaces in which they travel, Camille’s gift also transforms space. When her group is attacked, she creates light to illuminate the nighttime combat; when the campfire becomes a threat indicating their position, she imagines a sudden deluge; when her friends are pursued, she uses her imaginative powers to create an immense barrier that allows the group to escape unharmed.

Camille’s mental journeys through the Imagination are important to the survival of her group during their quests in the Other World. Nevertheless, these mental pathways are no less perilous than those of the physical world. In both trilogies, the powerful emperor of Gwendalavir gives Camille the impossible task of unblocking the realm of the Imagination, which is invaded by differing evil monsters in each series. As Baker’s remark that fantasy is concerned with both exterior and interior geographies suggests, Camille’s quest requires both literal mobility through space and mental mobility within the realm of the Imagination. Faced with enemies whose powers of the Imagination are equal to her own, Camille uses her journeys along the Imagination’s Spires to maintain her mobility and freedom. Whereas her arch-enemy Éléa Ril’ Morienva uses her powers of Imagination to imprison, destroy and murder, Camille repeatedly chooses unseen mental pathways that assist her companions in their battles and that ultimately preserve the existence of Gwendalavir.

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the Spheres are the paths that run through it. There are an infinity of paths, and infinity of possibles, which the artist’s power opens.”

Just as the other fantasy protagonists in this project are solely responsible for the defeat of evil and the survival of all worlds, Camille also learns that she—and she alone—possesses the talent to rescue Gwendalavir. Such a revelation is not one she has the power to ignore. Whereas Pullman’s Master of Oxford is adamant that Lyra be free to make her own choices,<sup>41</sup> Camille’s mission is repeatedly confirmed and imposed upon her by other adults. Edwin, the warrior par excellence, affirms that Camille “représente sans doute la dernière chance de l’Empire” (*D’un monde à l’autre* 163),<sup>42</sup> a phrase that echoes the destiny of Luke Skywalker in George Lucas’ *Star Wars*. Camille’s mentor, Maître Duom Nil’Erg, tells her that “[l]a survie de Gwendalavir passe par toi...” (*Les Frontières de Glace* 84).<sup>43</sup> In contrast to her former life, where she describes herself as an inanimate object, (“Les gens qui me servent de parents éprouvent pour moi l’affection qu’ils éprouveraient pour un tapis” [*D’un monde à l’autre* 161]),<sup>44</sup> Camille has a new name, Ewilan, a new destiny, and an astonishing number of physical and mental spaces that are suddenly open to her. Moreover, her choice to save Gwendalavir will also allow her to rescue her true parents and reconstitute her original family. Finding herself in a place where she truly belongs and which needs her presence in return, Ewilan accepts her new identity, her quest, and the possibility that she can construct a place for herself by rescuing her parents and reconstitute the family she has lost.

Conversely, Ewilan discovers that using the Imagination to change the space around has consequences no less perilous than the openings Will Parry creates with the subtle knife. Just as

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<sup>41</sup> See the Master of Oxford’s explanation of Lyra’s journey and its importance in *The Golden Compass*: “Lyra has a part to play in all this and a major one. The irony is that she must do it all without realizing what she’s doing” (31).

<sup>42</sup> Translation: “represents without doubt the last chance for the Empire.”

<sup>43</sup> Translation: “The survival of Gwendalavir depends upon you...”

<sup>44</sup> Translation: “the people who are supposed to be my parents have all the affection for me that they would have for a rug!”



Will's knife has unknowable intentions,<sup>45</sup> Ewilan's creation of a similar knife unwittingly renders space more threatening. Unlike other designs in Gwendalavir that disappear soon after their creation, the knife Ewilan creates is a permanent object. In imagining this knife into being, Ewilan has irrevocably altered reality. Her initial forays into the Imagination are noticed by enemy monsters whose powers of Imagination resemble allow them to locate her based on her mental creations.

As Duom tells her, permanently altering space is an action that cannot be reversed: "Un dessinateur joue avec les forces de la nature, il ne les viole pas. Ta création est un outrage à la réalité" (*Les Frontières de Glace* 63).<sup>46</sup> Ewilan's creation of the knife is an act of such magnitude that it leaves an indelible trace in the world of the Spheres. She learns that she has unwittingly revealed her traveling companions' location to their pursuers, who attack shortly afterwards. Like all the protagonists in this study who must learn when to refrain from using their powers, Ewilan realizes that she has a responsibility both to the spaces that surround her and to those with whom she travels. As a result, part of Ewilan's education is learning to control how and within which safe spaces she can access the realm of the Imagination.

For Ewilan, as for Lyra, Harry, and Guilemot, choosing to use her skills—or to refrain from doing so—is part of her mental and psychological growth. As she explains to Salim, "je sens, au plus profond de moi, que je ne dois pas abuser du Pouvoir. C'est une question d'équilibre. Quand je dessine, je trompe la réalité" (196).<sup>47</sup> In a world at risk, she cannot blithely leapfrog from world to world, from space to space, modifying reality as she goes.

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<sup>45</sup>For Iorek Byrnison's reaction to the power of Will's knife in *The Amber Spyglass*, see chapter three, footnote 245.

<sup>46</sup> Translation: "A designer plays with the forces of nature; he does not violate them. Your creation represents an outrage against reality."

<sup>47</sup> Translation: "I feel in my depths that I must not abuse the Power. It's a question of balance. When I draw, I deceive reality." See also her explanation in *La Forêt des Captifs* (147-149).

Instead, Ewilan learns that her actions must maintain the balance of magical forces rather than upsetting them. As is the case for Harry, Guillemot, Lyra and Will, Ewilan's initiation reminds readers that part of growing up is learning to balance self-control with temerity. Choosing when to act and when to refrain from it is crucial to the fantasy hero's quest.

In her movement through the dangerous and forbidding spaces of Gwendalavir's forests and mountains, Ewilan depends on a group of loyal companions. Just as similar groups or friends accompany Guillemot, Harry, and Lyra, the individuals who surround Ewilan indicate how treacherous her new world is. From the commander Edwin, she quickly learns that in Gwendalavir, "Nous vivons une période noire" (*D'un monde à l'autre* 67).<sup>48</sup> As a result, community is necessary for Ewilan's survival in the new geography confronting her. As Philippe Clermont points out, Bottero's group follows Tolkien's model from *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which Bottero himself has described as foundational to his sense of story.<sup>49</sup> Ewilan's group is composed of her friend Salim, her teacher Duom, the steely and inflexible warrior Edwin, a female warrior and sister-figure Ellana, and the bon-vivant, comical, chevalier Bjorn. These characters not only give Ewilan physical protection from the numerous and bloody battles that the heroic adventure narrative requires, but they also form a family she has never had: "des amis loyaux tenaient désormais le rôle que les Duciel avaient toujours refusé" (*L'Île du Destin*

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<sup>48</sup>Translation: "We are living in a dark time."

<sup>49</sup> When asked about his own initiation into fantasy literature, Bottero always refers to the French translation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, *Le Seigneur des Anneaux*. In the September 2009 issue of *Lecture Jeune*, Bottero described reading Tolkien's trilogy as "une révolution" (8). "A partir de ce moment," he explains, "je me suis passionné pour la littérature fantastique alors que j'avais beaucoup de réticences vis-à-vis les romans proposés à l'école. J'associais ces derniers à l'idée d'une lecture obligatoire, douloureuse" (8). / Translation: "From that moment on, I became passionate about fantasy literature, whereas I had so much hesitation towards the books proposed to me at school. I associated these latter with the idea of required, painful reading." See also his essay, "L'Auteur" on the Rageot website at <[http://www.lesmondesimaginairesderageot.com/univers/auteur.asp?cd\\_=EWILAN](http://www.lesmondesimaginairesderageot.com/univers/auteur.asp?cd_=EWILAN)>.

153).<sup>50</sup> Part of Ewilan's inner, emotional journey is the creation of this new family, in which each member is tied to each other not by blood relation, but by their repeated choices to continue their journey together. For instance, at the beginning of *Les Tentacules du Mal*, Ewilan's expanded group chooses to continue their journey with her, despite the Emperor's express order that they return to Gwendalavir. Their choices are a sign of the group's collective sense that, despite their many differences, they are responsible for one another regardless of their other duties.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, the narrative space Bottero accords to the group's cohesion draws on the importance of friends among adolescent and young adult readers. If adolescent readers of Bottero's series find themselves intimidated by places in their own world, the unknown spaces of Gwendalavir become less frightening to Ewilan because she is in the presence of friends.

Clermont posits that:

[p]ossible représentation de l'importance du group d'amis ou d'ami(e) privilégié(e) dans les mœurs des adolescents réels, les héros bénéficient de l'aide proche, concrète et quasi permanente de cet ... être collectif composé d'individus différents aux aptitudes complémentaires. (189)<sup>52</sup>

Caroline Westberg, Bottero's editor at Rageot, concurs with Clermont, explaining that during adolescence, a young adult's group of friends become a tribe or family: "Les ados," she explains, "sont à un âge où l'on se structure énormément, en group, en bande" ("Rencontre avec Rageot Editeur" Question 12).<sup>53</sup> As is the case for Tolkien's Fellowship, Ewilan's group also follows a

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<sup>50</sup> Translation: "loyal friends now filled the role the Duciels had always refused her."

<sup>51</sup> See *L'Île du Destin* (24-25) and *Les Tentacules du Mal* (28-30).

<sup>52</sup> Translation: "Possible representation of the importance of the group of friends or the privileged [boy or girl] companion in the habits of real adolescents., the hero benefits from nearby aid, concrete and nearly-permanent, often a collective group composed of different individuals of complimentary talents."

<sup>53</sup> Translation: "Adolescents are at an age where one structures one's life as a member of a group or band."

pattern of action and calm. The narrative makes a space for warriors such as Edwin, Ellana, and Bjorn to show off their martial prowess, as well as a space in which Salim and Bjorn jest, Duom explains the rules of the Imagination, and characters (Salim and Ewilan; Edwin and Ellana) become increasingly romantically attached.<sup>54</sup> In spaces that are not safe at all, the camaraderie of the group forms an emotional space in which Ewilan feels protected and at ease.

This space of emotional safety contrasts directly with the dystopic places the group encounters. Like the spaces of L'Homme's Realm of Ys and Uncertain World, in which towns and cities are isolated by seas, deserts, and forests, Bottero's Other World also contains few cities surrounded by wilds. Both L'Homme and Bottero's creations confirm Ursula LeGuin's earlier assertion in chapter one that fantasy is a "real wilderness" (5). These worlds are not ones in which readers or protagonists should feel reassured or safe. Accordingly, LeGuin's definition of fantasy as "a game played for very high stakes" (5) rings true for readers of Bottero's cycle. Despite his characters' superhuman powers, frequent brushes with death, and their equally supernatural animal and human adversaries, characters do suffer atrociously and die. As if to warn readers from becoming too comfortable, Bottero's descriptions are not sparing. His Other World may not be boring, but it is hazardous to those who venture into it.

The group's journeys are regularly interrupted by the appearance of terrifying and horrific creatures, requiring bloody battle scenes from which Ewilan's faithful companions usually emerge wounded but victorious. Herein lies one major difference between Bottero and the other writers in this study: Bottero's warrior characters kill for the glory of vanquishing their enemies. Although Pullman's Will Parry and Lee Scoresby despise the violence in which they

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<sup>54</sup> See also Clermont's comment that "La communauté qui se constitue autour d'Ewilan dans son périple, avec guerriers, mage, voleurs et Elfe, tient à la fois de la Communauté de l'Anneau et d'une équipe de personnages de jeux de rôles" (195). / Translation: "The community that follows Ewilan on her journey, with its warriors, wizard, thieves and Elf owes its origins to the Fellowship of the Ring and to a team of characters from a role-playing game."

are engaged, and Harry refuses to use the “Avada Kedavra” curse,<sup>55</sup> Bottero peoples his narrative with equally skilled male (Edwin, Bjorn, Maniel) and female (Ellana, Siam, Erylis) fighters who profess no ambivalence or distaste for necessary carnage. Despite Edwin’s earlier warning in *Les Frontières de Glace* that “Tuer n’est jamais un acte anondin ... et seuls les monstres le font par plaisir” (101),<sup>56</sup> the sheer quantity of dead bodies that stack up in the course of both trilogies suggests that Bottero’s alternate worlds are spaces in which violence is appropriate, acceptable, and necessary. In *Les Tentacules du Mal*, Ellana’s elegant and swift killing of a beast prompts applause from the very crowd that wishes her death in the Valingai arena, and she accepts their ovation, “comme un dû” (293).<sup>57</sup> In the same scene, Bjorn rejoices that his heroic combat will earn him a place as a legendary warrior: “Il entonna un chant guerrier, conscient d’écrire une page de légende. Jamais il n’avait été aussi heureux” (316).<sup>58</sup> In Gwedavir and elsewhere, survival requires violence, and its repetition underscores the superhuman powers of Bottero’s characters, as well as the violence typical to the role-playing games that inform his narrative. The fact that such brushes with death are so common confirms the dystopic spaces in which the members of Bottero’s group find themselves.

Similarly, Ewilan learns that failure of her quest will bring about irrevocable violence in the worlds she knows; just as her choice to continue it will enact a kind of psychic violence on herself:

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<sup>55</sup> In *The Subtle Knife*, Lee Scorsby deplores the futility of the shoot-out in which he participates and which costs his own life. “Those poor men didn’t have to come to this, nor did we” (270). In *The Amber Spyglass*, Will Parry is disgusted by his participation in necessary murder. “I hate this,” said Will passionately, “truly, truly, I hate this killing! When will it stop?” (30). In *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry refuses to kill, saying “I won’t blast people out of my way just because they’re there” (71).

<sup>56</sup> Translation: “Killing is never an anondine act...only monsters do it for pleasure.”

<sup>57</sup> Translation: “as her due.”

<sup>58</sup> Translation: “He struck up a warrior’s chant, conscious of writing page worthy of legend. Never had he been so happy.”

*Si tu échoues, les mondes tels que tu les connais...n'existeront plus.....Tu seras seule et certaines décisions que tu prendras seront des blessures qui ne se guériront jamais..."*  
(*Les Tentacules du Mal* 24; ital. orig.)<sup>59</sup>

Here again, the warning to Ewilan reminds readers of the similar prophecy made about Lyra's quest in *The Golden Compass*: "that's the saddest thing: *she* will be the betrayer and the experience will be terrible" (*GC* 32; ital. orig.). The major difference, of course, is that Ewilan hears the prophecy herself. At the same time, Ewilan refuses to give up her own life. When the Dragon tells her she is destined for a death of self-sacrifice, Ewilan's furious refusal communicates her desire to make her own decisions and choices:

ne me fait pas la leçon maintenant, ne me dis pas comment je dois agir et ne me parle pas de mon avenir. Il m'appartient. À moi et à moi seule! (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 192).<sup>60</sup>

Even as she knows that the space of Gwendalavir and all worlds beyond it depend upon her decisions, Ewilan's outburst indicates the degree to which she values her agency, liberty, and freedom. Having found a place where she belongs in Gwedalavir, Ewilan refuses the possibility of its destruction, and she also refuses her own. Ewilan is not Harry, calmly accepting his fate to die by Voldemort's wand in *The Deathly Hallows*. In lashing out against her supposed "destiny," Ewilan exemplifies the teenager's rebellion against adult authority. Her words align her with Lyra's declaration, "I don't want to die. I love being alive..." (*AS* 267). Even as their choices appall them, both Lyra and Ewilan cling to freedom to make those choices—a freedom that is only possible if they remain alive. Like Lyra, Harry and Guillemot, Ewilan is a rebel. Knowing that she is expected to die makes her all the more determined to live and to act on her own terms.

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<sup>59</sup> Translation: "If you fail, the worlds as you know them...will no longer exist. You will be alone and certain decisions that you make will be wounds that will never heal."

<sup>60</sup> Translation: "Do not give me lessons now; do not tell me how to act, and do not speak of my future. It belongs to me. To me and to me only!"

Paradoxically, Lyra and Ewilan's determination to live is a source of incredible suffering. Lyra is sexually assaulted at Bolvangar; she is later captured and drugged by Ms. Coulter, and she finally painfully tears herself away from her dæmon, Pantalaimon in the world of the dead. Similarly, Ewilan finds herself held prisoner in the experimental hospital the Institution in *La Forêt des Captifs*. Her own body becomes a prison in *L'Œil d'Otolep*. Alternatively, as a fantasy heroine, she must choose to act, even as her choices offer no feasible solutions. Charged with saving a multiverse whose dimensions are beyond the scope of human understanding,<sup>61</sup> Ewilan acts with no less urgency than Pullman's Lyra, despite the pain her best efforts to choose the right path cause her. Her journey to the *Frontières de Glace*, the Icy Frontiers, leads to the death of one of her protectors, Hans. Likewise, her insistence on traveling to Valingäi to find her parents results in the violent deaths of her friends, Erylis, Artis, and Maniel. The more she travels into the space of L'Autre Monde, the more Ewilan realizes that her choices put the very family she has constructed at risk.

This dystopic violence is especially true of the worlds of Bottero's second trilogy. Bottero reverses the happy ending of *L'Île du Destin*, in which Ewilan's mother reassuringly promises her daughter that their family will remain together, unseparated by space: "Je suis là, ma petite, je suis là. Je ne te quitterai plus jamais" (293).<sup>62</sup> Instead, *La Forêt des Captifs* opens with Ewilan's parents leaving her behind to travel to the unknown world beyond *La Mer des Brumes* (the Foggy Sea) in order to explore unknown worlds and uncharted spaces beyond Gwendalavir. Their departure provokes an emotional reaction which Ewilan is forced to hide:

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<sup>61</sup> Bottero creates two mythological characters, a Dragon, known as le Héros de la Dame (the Lady's Hero), and a giant whale, known as La Dame (the Lady), who frequently communicate with Ewilan. Both the Dragon and the Lady possess far more knowledge than humans, and their pronouncements and demands tend to underscore human life as relatively inconsequential.

<sup>62</sup> Translation: "I am here, my little one, I am here. I will never leave you again."

Ewilan avait assisté au départ de ses parents... la gorge nouée par l'inquiétude et la tristesse. Les perdre alors qu'elle ne les avait retrouvés quelques semaines plus tôt lui paraissaient le comble de l'injustice... (16)<sup>63</sup>

Ewilan realizes that she cannot control her parents' choices. Once again, she will have to choose her path and her place without their guidance or support. Her disappointment at the beginning of the second series not only foreshadows the inward and outward dystopias she will confront, but also allows Bottero to acknowledge his readers' own potential sense of the unfairness and disappointment in their own lives.

As its title *La Forêt des Captifs* (*The Forest of Captives*) suggests, Bottero's second version of the reader's world is darker than the first. Ewilan's enemies in Gwendalavir have followed her to France, where they proceed to create havoc. Ts'lich monsters (a blend of dragon and praying mantis) wander the streets of France, randomly eviscerating their human victims; gangs of skinheads prey on subway passengers; mercenaries with automatic weapons attack a peaceable farmhouse. Just as ordinary London begins to fall apart with the rise of Lord Voldemort in *The Half-Blood Prince*, the fictional space of the reader's own world also becomes increasingly violent. It is true that some of Bottero's readers see Gwendalavir as a safe place or "refuge," in which to escape the pressures of their own lives, a reading seconded by Virole's psychoanalytic interpretation.<sup>64</sup> Yet if anything, Bottero's depiction of the reader's world in his

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<sup>63</sup>Translation: "Ewilan had attended the departure of her parents, her throat knotted with grief. To lose them again when she had only found them a few weeks before seemed to be the height of injustice."

<sup>64</sup> Bottero's readers repeatedly celebrate the mental escape his series offers. One adolescent's responds by comparing Gwendalavir to a safe space, or refuge to which he or she can escape: "Pour moi, Gwendalavir, c'est comme un refuge; je peux m'y rendre si je ne me sens pas bien" ("Nous sommes éveillés!"13). / Translation: "For me, Gwendalavir is like a refuge; I can go there if I don't feel well." See also Benoît Virole's hypothesis that in Bottero's texts, "[t]out se passe comme si les jeunes lecteurs, peut-être déboussolés par la complexité d'une société réelle qui échappe à leur entendement, tout autant qu'au nôtre, trouvaient dans les descriptions des mondes imaginaires, mais organisés, la possibilité d'une compréhension rassurante" (18). Translation: "It all happens as if young readers, perhaps disoriented by complexity of real society, which escapes their understanding, as much as it does our own, find in the description of imaginary yet organized, ordered worlds, the possibility of reassuring understanding and comprehension."



second trilogy complicates the equation between fantasy and safety. Rather, it suggests that the temptation to use fantasy as a means of escape should also be tempered by the knowledge that real dystopias outside the text. The reader's world will require no less heroism than that of Ewilan and her companions.

Likewise, Ewilan is immediately captured and imprisoned in a secret, experimental hospital known only as the Institution. In keeping with Pullman's Bolvangar, where children are separated from their dæmons by the process of intercision, the Institution separates Ewilan from her ability to access the Imagination. Like Pullman's intercised child, Tony, Ewilan also feels a void, a gapping wound where she is "comme amputée d'une partie de son esprit" (*La Forêt des Captifs* 36).<sup>65</sup> In Bottero's narrative, the secretly sanctioned abuse of children possessing supernatural powers foregrounds the spaces and places in the second trilogy as both darker and more menacing than those in the first. More importantly, the abuse Ewilan experiences at the hands of her captors robs her of physical strength and the ability to act on her own behalf, as she later explains:

Je n'étais qu'une chose entre leurs mains, chuchota-t-elle d'une voix rauque. Un simple jouet qu'ils avaient entrepris de démonter pour comprendre son fonctionnement. (*La Forêt des Captifs* 161)<sup>66</sup>

Like the rug to which she compared herself earlier, Ewilan's sense of herself as an object to be dissected and dismantled highlights how her inner space has been invaded and destroyed. She is equally cognizant that her rescue left her friend Maniel in a deathlike coma. Similarly, Salim,

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<sup>65</sup> Translation: "as if amputated from a part of herself." For a discussion of Pullman's intercised child, Tony, see chapter three.

<sup>66</sup> Translation: "I was only an object in their hands, she whispered in a hoarse voice. "A simple toy they had decided to take apart to understand its mechanisms."

who carries her to safety, is no less wounded and starving than Pullman's Will Parry in *The Subtle Knife*.<sup>67</sup>

Ewilan's return from near death in *La Forêt des Captifs* and her new quest to find her parents in the following volume, *L'Œil d'Otolep*, leave her inwardly ravaged by a crushing sense of destiny she can neither escape nor modify. She describes the erosion of her own agency in spatial terms of "walls" and enclosure: "j'ai l'impression de ne plus être maîtresse de mon destin, comme si je suivais une route bordée de murs immenses..." (*L'Œil d'Otolep* 176).<sup>68</sup> Moreover, when Ewilan expresses her growing loss of equilibrium to Duom Nil' Erg, her mentor's explanation suggests that she is "merely" experiencing growing pains associated with adolescence (*L'Œil d'Otolep* 177). Having experienced imprisonment and loss of freedom, Ewilan values her liberty, and finds such an opinion insufficient.

Ewilan's loss of control over her place in the world coincides with the invasion of her inner physical space, as an unknown parasite from the Institution drains her body of life. In her other quests, Ewilan has maintained a sense of her own autonomy. Her earlier, even violent, response to Salim, "Je fais ce que je veux! aboya-t-elle. Où je veux, comme je veux et quand je veux! Compris?" (*L'Île du Destin* 256)<sup>69</sup> indicates both the importance of freedom ("comme" "quand") and space ("Où je veux") in Ewilan's life. By contrast, in *L'Œil d'Otolep*, Ewilan's

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<sup>67</sup> Compare the parallel descriptions of Bottero's Salim in *La Forêt des Captifs* with Pullman's description of Will at the end of *The Subtle Knife*: Bottero's description reads: "Un garçon épuisé, couvert d'écorchures, qui continuait à avancer bien qu'à bout de forces, ses jambes menaçant à tout moment de flancher sous lui, tremblant de fatigue et de froid" (90). / Translation: "An exhausted boy, covered with scratches, who continued to advance even though he was at the end of his forces, his legs menacing at any moment to fall under him, so trembling was he with fatigue and cold." Pullman describes Will in no less physical misery "it was wild outside him and wild within....And Will was savage now. He felt at the end of everything; and if it was the end of his life, he was going to fight and fight till he fell" (*SK* 280).

<sup>68</sup> Translation: "I have the impression that I am no longer the mistress of my destiny, as if I was following a road bordered by immense walls."

<sup>69</sup> Translation: "I do what I want," she barked. "Where I want, how I want and when I want! Understand?"

“irrepressible besoin d’espace et de mouvement” (45)<sup>70</sup> is eaten away without her knowledge. Ironically, because Bottero’s chapters begin with quotations from various, fictional texts from *L’Autre Monde*, which hint at the source of Ewilan’s malady, the reader is more prepared for the discovery of the parasite than Ewilan herself.<sup>71</sup> The inner space of Ewilan’s physically devastated body in *La Forêt des Captifs* and *L’Œil d’Otolep* becomes a kind of synecdoche for the ravaged lands and cities she and her companions will find in *Les Tentacules du Mal*.

This combination of psychic and physical pain reminds readers of the ethical difficulties good choices entail. Like Will Parry’s mangled hand that prompts his own father to call him a warrior in *The Subtle Knife*, Ewilan’s inner space of her own body is a reminder of the restrictions and limitations of her choices. Ewilan realizes that:

Elle avait le choix. S’effondrer pour attendre sa mort prochaine ou continuer à obéir à la formidable impulsion qui la poussait en avant.  
Non, c’était faux, elle n’avait pas le choix. (*L’Œil d’Otolep* 273)<sup>72</sup>

Ewilan’s first thought is that she can passively wait to die or continue her quest and die in the process. She realizes, however, that this first choice is a false one. By choosing to be part of the expedition to Valingāi to find her parents, she has already accepted a path; she has already chosen the space in which she finds herself. She must choose to continue her quest.

Conversely, Ewilan’s miraculous recovery at the end of the fifth book allows for the continuation of her journey, as well as Bottero’s series. Yet Ewilan’s emergence from the healing space of the deep waters of the Eye of Otolep has the reverse effect of sending her into a

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<sup>70</sup> Translation: “irrepressible need for space and movement”

<sup>71</sup> See for example the quotation at beginning of chapter 20, which reads, “N’ralai: creature polymorphe de l’île de Nimurdes se reproduisant par parasitisme. *Encyclopédie du Savoir et du Pouvoir*” (136; ital. orig.). /Translation: “N’ralai: a polymorphous creature from the isle of the Nimurdes which reproduces itself as parasite. *Encyclopedia of Knowledge and Power*.”

<sup>72</sup> Translation: “She had the choice: she could wait for her coming death or continue to obey the overwhelming pressure that pushed her forward. No, that was false. She did not have the choice.”

doomed new world. In the final volume, *Les Tentacules du Mal*, Ewilan and her comrades explore a world apart from the Other World. Like L’Homme’s Yénibohor, which is governed by priests who exert quasi-total control over the city, Bottero’s new world is also controlled by a demonic, supernatural deity, whose name L’Ahmour, metonymically signals amour/love as of a kind of demand for destructive self-love that obliterates everything in its path. Trapped in the doomed cities of Hurindaï and Valingaï, Ewilan and her companions find that these dystopias restrict their movement and freedom. This realization is clearest upon their arrival at Valingaï, where they are imprisoned and slated to die in its arena for the entertainment of the general public.

At issue in this final battle is the choice that space offers. As a dystopia, the space of the arena denies choice and negates freedom, as Ewilan and her companions are surrounded by a crowd roaring for their blood. Conversely, having chosen to accompany Ewilan thus far, her companions have also already accepted the possibility of this space. Rather than dying passively, their choice to strike out against the evil they find there is a collective reiteration of Ewilan’s decision to attempt to stop Ahmour’s violence from engulfing all worlds. The arena is a space in which some of Ewilan’s friends, like Maniel and Artis, will accept their own deaths as necessary moments to teach those whose lives they spare. Artis tells the unhappy Mathieu, “N’oublie pas d’être heureux” (308), just as Maniel tells Ewilan “On a toujours le choix. Toujours. Il suffit de faire la bonne (329).<sup>73</sup> For Ewilan and those who survive the dystopia of Valingaï, life is a gift. Just as it is incumbent on Pullman’s Lyra and Will to be cheerful despite their painful separation,<sup>74</sup> making good choices and choosing happiness over despair are the

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<sup>73</sup> Translation: “Do not forget to be happy” and “You always have the choice. Always. It is enough to choose the good one.”

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of Pullman’s ethic of cheerfulness as a necessity, see chapter three.

lessons that Ewilan and her companions learn in the midst of a space that ironically appears to negate that possibility.

More importantly, the mysterious and powerful crone Ellundril Chariakin accepts Ewilan's projected death. In a gesture that rewrites the final act of Tolkien's Gollum, who pitches himself into the volcano after Frodo's ring in *The Return of the King*, Ellundril chooses flies into the abyss of darkness that is Ahmour, carrying the medallion whose return will rid all worlds of the malevolent deity's power to hurt. Her decision encapsulates how space and place function in Bottero's cycle. When Ewilan thanks her, Ellundril explains her act as one of discovery rather than heroic sacrifice:

Ne laisse pas la reconnaissance fausser ton jugement. Je n'agis pas par altruisme. J'ai simplement envie de découvrir de nouveaux horizons et j'ai conscience que tu es à ta place dans ce monde, bien plus que moi. (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 341)<sup>75</sup>

Just as Rowling's Dumbledore defines death as "the next great adventure" (*Sorter's* 297), Ellundril understands her act as one that will open new, unknown horizons to her. Her flight into the abyss recalls the similar sacrifice of Lyra's parents in *The Amber Spyglass*. More importantly, Ellundril's choice also redefines death as an act of discovery of spaces she cannot yet see. Her following affirmation of Ewilan's "place" in the world highlights the new series of choices that will be open to Ewilan as a result of her daunting journey.

Without doubt, the Valingai arena is the most dystopic of all places in Bottero's cycle. Despite this vicious final battle, the most brutal damage occurs not in the arena, but in the space of Ewilan's family, where the carnage is psychological rather than physical. Having at last found her parents, Ewilan learns that her father's past amorous liaison with her female arch-nemesis, Éléa Ril' Morienva—the very villain Ewilan and her companions have pursued for

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<sup>75</sup> Translation: "Do not let gratitude cloud your judgement. I do not act out of altruism. I simply wish to discover new horizons and I am aware that you have a place in this world far more than I."

three years—led to her family’s separation and to the instability of the very empire she saves at such deep and personal cost. Over the course of the series, Ewilan has defended her parents’ honor in their absence from insinuations of disloyalty. As a result, she can scarcely put into words her sense of profound shock, as is evidenced by the ellipses marking her hesitation: “Mon père...mon père s’est comporté... en salaud” (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 268).<sup>76</sup> Where she expected to find a heroic resistant to evil, Ewilan instead learns the difficult truth that her father is human and fallible. Moreover, finding her parents does not resolve her sense of “place” even as she is now free to have a family. Instead, this moment of anagnorisis complicates her sense of family, making the place she hoped to find with her parents much less certain, less stable, and less sure. Ewilan experiences her father’s admission of infidelity as a wrenching, destructive tear: “Entendre son père reconnaître les faits était une déchirure” (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 380).<sup>77</sup> For adolescent readers who have experienced their own parents’ separations, divorces, and extramarital affairs, Ewilan’s sense of inner destruction may indeed be achingly real.

Thus, Ewilan’s return to her parents’ home at the series’ end situates her once again in a problematic place. Ill at ease with the parents she barely knows, she is no longer a girl of thirteen. Now sixteen, Ewilan’s long independence and the heavy responsibility she has shouldered alone make being a dutiful daughter difficult, as is evidenced by her derisive laughter when her father asks her about her late return: “C’est amusant que tu t’inquiètes...alors que pour la première fois depuis des mois, depuis des années peut-être, je ne risque justement rien” (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 379).<sup>78</sup> Ewilan recognizes that her parents’ original act of erasing her

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<sup>76</sup> Translation: “My father...my father behaved...like a bastard.”

<sup>77</sup> Translation: “To hear her father recognize the facts was like being torn apart.”

<sup>78</sup> Translation: “It’s amusing that you’re worried...just when for the first time in months, maybe years, I am risking absolutely nothing.”

childhood memories of Gwendalavir and sending her into hiding in the real world was intended as a gesture of love and protection. She nevertheless resents that erasure and her involuntary exile. As she tells her real mother:

Pourquoi nous étonner maintenant que nous ne formions pas une famille soudée, heureuse d'être enfin réunie? Sais-tu, parmi les milliers de souvenirs qui se bousculent sous mon crâne, une poignée à peine vous concerne? (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 382)<sup>79</sup>

Even as she admits her parents' love and the difficulty of their own past choices, Ewilan realizes that she has earned the right to make decisions of her own. She can choose her own path, confirming Bottero's assertion that "[m]on personnage a autant de possibilités qu'il y a des chemins qui se présentent à lui. Par conséquent, une multitude d'émotions ou d'actions s'offrent à lui" ("Rencontre" 10).<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Ewilan's journeys into the multiple pathways of the Imagination have taught her that power of self-determination is hers if she is willing to take it. Because she has spent three years deciding how she will survive, especially when her freedom has been taken away, Ewilan can see more paths, choices, and options than those which her parents are willing to consider. Remembering Maniel's words at Valingaï, "Il suffit de faire la bonne" (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 329),<sup>81</sup> Ewilan knows that her choices will determine the spaces and places that remain open to her, just as those choices will also close off other possibilities. Like Pullman's Will and Lyra who choose the places of their own separate worlds at the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, Ewilan's realizes that making a 'good' choice about her place in the world and those with whom she shares it requires as much courage as any battle she has faced throughout the series.

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<sup>79</sup> Translation: "Why should we be surprised now that we don't form a close-knit family, happy to be reunited at last? Do you know that out of all the memories knocking around in my head, only a handful concern you?"

<sup>80</sup> Translation: "My character has as many possibilities as there are paths open to him or her. Consequently, a multitude of emotions or actions are available to that person."

<sup>81</sup> Translation: "You always have the choice. Always. It is enough to choose the right one."

## Conclusion

In most of the series which this project examines, Rowling, L'Homme and Pullman follow the traditional narrative trajectory of the hero's return to his or her place of origin as a maturing young adult. Rowling's Harry becomes a father who sees his own children off to Hogwarts at Platform 9 ¾. Guillemot returns from the Uncertain World to Ys, armed with knowledge that he is the worthy son of his father, Qadehar. At the end of Pullman's *Amber Spyglass*, Lyra returns to Oxford with the prospect of relearning to read the alethiometer; Will and Mary enter their own Oxford to care for Will's mother and to face the bureaucracy of the British legal system.

Of all the protagonists, Bottero's Ewilan is the only one to refuse to remain at home and in place. Here desire for freedom and space are a marker of her maturity. From the Duciels' house, to the Institution, to Valingai, the places she has known have all been restrictive. Having fulfilled her destiny, she chooses freedom and space together with Salim, Ellana and Edwin. The four leave Gwendalavir and embark on a return journey to the prairies of *Les Plaines Souffle*, the Whispering Plains. As its name suggests, these plains are a space of freedom, peace, and quiet, where they join the tribe of *les Fils du Vent*, the Sons of the Wind. Like Pullman's *mulefa*, who travel by seed pods, Bottero's tribe also migrates through the fields on platforms equipped with sails and wheels. The space is idyllic, as emphasized by its lack of barriers:

Un vent chaud balayait l'immensité des plaines Souffle, sculptant les hautes herbes comme il aurait sculpté des vagues sur l'océan, dessinant dans leur vert profond des formes magiques et éphémères. Marquant ainsi son éternelle tout-puissance. (*Les Tentacules du Mal* 397)<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Translation: "A hot wind swept the immensity of the Whispering Plains, sculpting the tall herbs as it would have sculpted the waves of the ocean, designing magical, ephemeral forms in its deep verdure. Marking thus its eternal power."



The power (“tout-puissance”) of this space derives from its integration with the forces of nature. Whereas exertion of human control leads to violence, this space is paradoxically stable precisely because of its flexibility and its capacity for movement. In seeking this space, Ewilan, her boyfriend Salim, her father-figure Edwin and his lover Ellana renounce violence. In the Whispering Plains, they seek a new kind of quest in which to learn how to live harmoniously rather than to die courageously. This is not the kind of harmony of motion and timing they have used to fight and to kill. Instead, it is the harmony with the self and with the other which one needs in order to live.

Conversely, most adult readers will admit that the space of Bottero’s denouement also confirms the ideal fantasy of the teenage reader. After all, what adolescents have not dreamed of reprimanding their parents, escaping their families, and going on perpetual joy-rides with their boy- or girlfriends? Fair enough. Yet I maintain that one of the young adult fantasy genre’s many functions is its role as a “space apart,” a necessary release-valve, which Bottero himself has equated with “des soupapes de sécurité” (*Le Télégramme* par 3).<sup>83</sup> Young adult fantasy functions to give readers of all ages the mental space in which to rehearse the freedom to accomplish what appears to be impossible. To return from the fantasy world and all the spaces it offers, and to live in the real places in one’s own world, takes no less courage and hope than the characters themselves demonstrate.

This shift to space and hope is evident when Edwin, who is repeatedly described throughout both trilogies as “le guerrier absolu à l’âme d’acier,” (the absolute warrior with the soul of steel), at last declares, “Nous avons la vie devant nous” (398).<sup>84</sup> To have life as one’s

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<sup>83</sup> Translation: “safety valve”

<sup>84</sup> Translation: “We have life ahead of us.”

future instead of death and to have the freedom to choose one's own space constitute the hopeful promise of the fantasy narrative. This hope informs Ewilan that she has made the good choice, as Maniel instructed her and that she has found her place as Ellundril Chariakin foresaw. It is also perhaps the reason one of Bottero's readers has said, "J'ai aimé d'autres livres, mais ceux de Bottero m'ont aidé à vivre" ("Nous sommes éveillés!" 14).<sup>85</sup> We all need books that help us live. We all need stories that open vistas and spaces for us and that remind us to carry those spaces with us as we move back into the world that awaits us at the story's end.

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<sup>85</sup> Translation: "I have liked other books, but those by Bottero helped me live."

## Conclusion

In the previous chapter, Benoît Virole posits that young adults turn to fantasy because it offers them simplified world spaces in which they find mental respite from the complexities of our own world. Fantasy, he notes, offers such young people a sense of “compréhension rassurante” (18) in a postmodern world.<sup>1</sup> Virole is certainly not the first to posit that fantasy worlds are less intricate than the real world, and that they are therefore comforting in their simplicity, but his explanation is misplaced. To the contrary, this project demonstrates that the fantasy worlds in the works of L’Homme, Pullman, Rowling, and Bottero are as complex than our own. In these works, space does not become smaller and more circumscribed. These authors multiply—rather than reduce—the spaces and places in which their narratives occur. By announcing their fictionnality, these texts force readers to abandon the boundaries of normalcy. The only norm, it would seem, is to expect the unexpected.

The major assumptions at the heart of this project are, firstly, that young adult fantasy matters as a subject of scholarly inquiry. Secondly, this study assumes that fantasy matters to the young adults who read these series in English or in French, regardless of country and regardless of language. As an example, the journal *Lecture Jeune* recently asked a group of French young adults who participate in online forums dedicated to fantasy to name the books in their “ideal library” or “bibliothèque idéale.” The result was a list of all the titles that have been the focus of this project (“Nous sommes éveillés!” 16). Although English readers do not yet have the

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “a reassuring comprehension.”

opportunity to read Bottero in translation, it is clear that these four narrative cycles are striking a particularly resonant chord with adolescent readers. The last question I will address here is why fantasy is able to do so.

Jack Zipes proposes that the role of fantasy is to “foster alternative thinking and viewing and negate spectacle and delusion” (83). Even as the corporate seizure of fantasy by mass media continues unabated—witness for example the new virtual Harry Potter ride at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida—Zipes avers that we need authentic fantasy all the more:

We do not need fantasy to compensate for dull lives, but...we need it for spiritual regeneration and to contemplate alternatives to harsh realities. More than titillation, we need the fantastic for resistance. (“Why Fantasy Matters Too Much” 79)

Like Zipes, I insist that fantasy narratives which have at their core the multiverse—those ever-expanding “other spaces,” heterotopias, or alternate worlds, give readers of all ages a way to explore the subversive otherness that mass media so easily glosses over. We need the spaces that fantasy offers *not* for escape, but because we need a way to live in this world without giving in to the mindless complicity television, film, and video games offer with the click of a button. Other spaces are “other” precisely because they are different, sometimes shockingly so. We need the disequilibrium of fantasy narratives to remind us that imagination, creativity, and quick thinking—skills that all the protagonists in this study display—cannot be cultivated if we remain in front of our computers and our television screens.

Yet fantasy narratives are more than a defense mechanism against consumer culture. Throughout this study, I also aver that fantasy narratives work to make us more aware of difference in the world around us. My argument is consonant with current thought by French and Anglophone scholars, many of whom see fantasy as a narrative form that privileges alterity. Anne Besson, for example, reads the multiple world spaces in Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* as a

sign of just how complicated our world, with its endless virtual spaces and hyperspaces, has become. Contrary to Virole, Besson views the intricacies of fantastic multiverses as reminders that boundaries in our own world are more porous than we might imagine. Besson claims that in young adult fantasy narratives, we find “une certaine porosité des univers comme du fictionnel et de l’actuel, celle que convoient les littératures de l’imaginaire, celle aussi sans doute de notre hypermodernité...” (“Autres Mondes” 8).<sup>2</sup> Such instability, in which space and place slip and collide, requires nimbleness of mind and agility of spirit, not complacent reassurance.

Likewise, in their essay collection, *Fantastique, fantasy, science-fiction: mondes imaginaires, étranges réalités* (2005), Estelle Valls de Gomis and Léa Sihol suggest that in celebrating marvelous other spaces, fantasy leaves readers with more questions than answers. In their view, fantasy is: “[u]ne littérature d’inventivité et de transgression des limites qui n’en finit jamais d’être une occasion de s’émerveiller, de s’interroger...et de se remettre en question” (15).<sup>3</sup> Because fantasy radically alters space and how we conceive it, it forces us to question what we normally accept as “reality”—fraught and weighty as the term “reality” may be. As a literature that is both liminal and limitless, fantasy demands that we face the artificiality of our own limits. It forces us to examine the places we call our own, and the boundaries we use to define those places. More importantly, fantasy challenges us to transgress those boundaries, and to step into the spaces that are not familiar, ordinary, or comfortable. In a similar vein, Charlotte Bousquet explains that if the heart of the traditional initiatory quest is self-knowledge through a series of heroic struggles, French fantasy in particular rewrites that quest as one that can only occur “à

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<sup>2</sup> Translation: “a certain porosity of universes, in the fictional as well as the current one, which literatures of the imaginary convey, and which is also, without doubt, a sign of our hypermodernity.”

<sup>3</sup> Translation: “a literature born of inventiveness and transgression of limits, which cease to be cause for marvel, wonder and questions”

*travers la relation à l'autre* alterité absolue...” (200; ital. orig.).<sup>4</sup> Like Bousquet, I agree that L’Homme and Bottero dramatize the encounter with the ‘other’ as a means of enlarging their protagonists’ and readers’ world views, but I also insist that the same could be said for the narratives of Rowling and Pullman.

Just as the French scholars privilege fantasy for its ability to move readers toward the ‘other,’ Anglophone scholars like Perry Nodelman also interpret young adult fantasy narratives as a crucial step for moving readers beyond themselves. Nodelman contends that these narratives offer readers “a consciousness of otherness, a revealing penetration of the limited vision imposed upon us by our own inevitably unique readings of reality” (“Some Presumptuous Generalizations about Fantasy” 178). Reading fantasy forces us to recognize those parts of ourselves that are also “other.” We discover our limits, and hopefully we move beyond them. Because fantasy creates a space in which such mental movement can occur, young adult fantasy author Tamora Pierce maintains that fantasy is “a literature of empowerment” (181). Pierce writes that young adults need fantasy because it “challenges readers to see beyond the concrete universe and to envision other ways of living and alternative mindsets” (180). It is not enough to recognize ourselves and the spaces and places that comprise our own world. Rather, by forcing us into multiple unfamiliar worlds, fantasy confronts us with others and the spaces they inhabit. Its power lies in teaching us to accept new people, new places, and the unusual solutions that those people and places may offer. In this study, I claim that even as fantasy renews our sense of wonder by baffling us with the unfamiliar, at its best, it also insists that we acknowledge the diversity in our own world and the diversity within ourselves.

Yet young adult fantasy does more than create eye-opening moments for consciousness-raising. It teaches readers to move forward with hope, and it is my argument that this hope is

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<sup>4</sup> Translation: “through the relationship to the other, absolute alterity...”

central to our understanding of the texts in this project. Yet given all that Harry, Guillemot, Lyra and Ewilan suffer and all the violence they endure, how can we still speak of fantasy as a literature of hope? All of these texts include disturbing images of young adults undergoing physical and psychological carnage. As much as we might prefer to believe that our world is safer than those in these narratives, we know that children and youth are frequently victims and perpetrators of violence. So how can we call fantasy hopeful if Lyra is nearly excised, if Ewilan is a plaything in the hands of the Institution, if Harry constantly loses the adults closest to him, and if Guillemot ends up in the hospital recovery room at the end of *Le Livre des Étoiles*?

To this question, I offer the following rebuttal: yes, we can and we should read fantasy with hope foremost in mind. I insist that the profound dystopias in all of these texts make hope an imperative. Part of hope is the knowledge that we are not alone in our struggles. Erik L’Homme admits that he purposefully chose a fatherless hero in Guillemot and that such a choice was an act of violence designed to reach his audience: “le héros se retrouve, au début de l’histoire à vivre sans son père. Il s’interroge, il souffre, c’est une vraie violence. Des lecteurs étaient vraiment touchés” (qtd. in Clerc and Sagnet 27).<sup>5</sup> L’Homme knows his readers are growing up in the absence of their own parents. Like Guillemot, all the protagonists in this study have little if any parental support. The psychological violence of their solitude mirrors the alienation and isolation of young adult readers themselves. Had L’Homme, Bottero, Rowling, and Pullman ignored the reality of their readers’ worlds, had they created happy, well-adjusted adolescent heroes, they would have denied the validity of their readers’ own lives. Instead, they each chose to magnify the difficulties that their readers face, in hopes of mapping a path through

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<sup>5</sup> Translation: “At the beginning of the story, the hero finds himself living without his father. He questions himself, he suffers, it is a real violence. Readers were truly touched.”

pain and despair, without letting either have the last word. Fantasy is a literature of hope because it tells readers that others are fighting the same battles. We do not wrestle alone.

I am focusing specifically on young adults in this last portion because their voices are not frequently quoted in scholarly literary journals. With the exceptions of brief mentions in chapters one and four, their voices are largely absent from this project. Adolescents are not members of our professional organizations, nor do they attend our conferences. But they sit in our classrooms every day. Their daily presence in our lives is why hope is crucial, both to the fantasy narrative and to us as scholars. Terry Pratchett, whose *Discworld* series is frequently mentioned in Anglophone and French fantasy anthologies, contends that more than anything else, fantasy teaches hope. As Pratchett proclaims:

Let there be goblin hordes, let there be terrible environmental threats, let there be giant mutated slugs if you must, but let there also be hope. It may be a grim, thin hope, an Arthurian sword at sunset, but let us know that we do not live in vain. (203)

Like the fictional dystopic elements he mentions, Pratchett recognizes that we also live in a world that opposes hope and belief. Whether we choose to look or not, our space—the world we live in—is dystopic. We are constantly confronted by the inequalities in our health-care, educational, and legal systems, and by the hunger, the poverty, and the violence in our own neighborhoods. We know that the spaces and places where we build our lives suffer from complacency, lassitude, power and greed. Given the dystopias in which we live, hope is an imperative, especially if we are working to change our world for the better.

What is perhaps less comfortable for adult readers and scholars to admit is that children and adolescents confront dystopias as much as we do. The British author G. K. Chesterton once famously acknowledged that “children have always known there are dragons. Fairy stories tell children that dragons can be killed.” (qtd. in Pratchett 205). Children and young adults know



their world is dangerous, whether that danger lurks in taunts from the playground or in lunchroom solitude. They know that their classrooms, their homes, and their neighborhoods are not safe havens *a priori*. Teachers like Severus Snape and Dolores Umbridge exist, and many students never have the chance to meet teachers like Qadehar or Dumbledore. Young adult readers live in families like the Duciels and the Dursleys, and in many cases, their families do not exist at all. Young adults know that they have no wands, no spells, and no alethiometers with which to combat their foes or guide their steps. Like Will Parry, they know that specters remain frighteningly real, whether we call them by those names or not. Young adults recognize their world is dystopic when they pass through metal detectors at their school and when they are bullied into silence. They know that their world requires Harry's courage and Lyra's tenacity when they wear the wrong clothes to school, say the wrong thing, belong to the wrong group, and when they have no group at all. Young people face dementors of their own when no one asks them to the prom, and when they don't make the team. They know that this world is a world of dragons when they vomit their dinner to be the right size, and open their parents' medicine cabinets to get high. These experiences are no less traumatizing than the encounters with the *gommons* and *ts'liche* monsters that haunt L'Homme's Guillemot and Bottero's Ewilan. As anyone who has ever worked with children and adolescents knows, these dragons are real, and they need slaying now.

Viewed from this angle, the fantasy narrative dramatizes the battle for hope by taking the reader's own dystopia and transforming it into a physical presence that can be conquered. Such a transformation teaches readers that when they face overwhelming odds, they need neither succumb to despair, nor hide their feelings of disappointment, rage, and fear. Instead, these

fantasy narratives dramatize ways to live in dystopia without losing hope. The young adult

fantasy narrative communicates a kind of hope that says:

You are not alone. You will need to be braver than you have ever been; you will need to break the rules and to cross boundaries that you cannot yet see. You will discover spaces that you have never imagined and you will meet people who challenge you to your core. You will get hurt doing it, and you will suffer atrociously, but you will survive. You are not alone.

All the fantasy narratives in this study presume engagement, suffering, hard work, and endurance. Yet at the same time that these narratives force readers outward, they also prepare those young adults to withstand and to outlast the challenges that await them. It takes time to learn these skills and it takes spaces to practice them. In this sense, these fantasy narratives are figurative Rooms of Requirement, all of which gives readers the space for necessary rehearsal so that they can face their own specters, dementors, and ts'liches with more confidence and less fear.

Fantasy does not just teach survival against slim odds, it also offers the promise that the spaces for which we struggle are worth the battle. The wounded heroes in these series attest that triumphant emergence from dystopia is within our grasp, but that we must also be brave enough to choose spaces in which such emergence can occur. If these stories are powerful enough to teach readers that surviving young adulthood is possible, then that is the hopeful message that more of our students need to hear.

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