

# **There and Back Again: Imperial and National Space in British Children's Fantasy**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the construction of space in a series of canonical British children's fantasy novels published over the period of decolonisation. The end of empire necessitated a dramatic shift in the understanding of what constituted the territorial boundaries of "Britain," and the location of national identity. Though the centrality of empire to nineteenth and early-twentieth century children's literature has been studied at length, until now little attention has been paid to the postimperial context of the twentieth-century British children's canon. Through an analysis of texts published between 1930 and 1980, the thesis argues that these novels utilise the fantasy genre to create heterotopic spaces—connected to but not of the dominant British space—within which changing ideas of "imperial" and "national" space can be negotiated. Organising the texts chronologically, I demonstrate a shift in focus over the period, from an outward-facing conception of British space as imperial space, to a domestic and inward-facing one. However, I trace the presence of both impulses ("there" and "back again") in each of the texts under discussion, showing that the two are often intertwined, and that the fantastic spaces analysed here frequently slip between or exist simultaneously in both registers. This "Janus-faced ambivalence," as Homi Bhabha has described it, creates an understanding of national space and thus national identity as unstable, contradictory, and in a constant state of negotiation that, I argue, underpins postimperial British children's literature.

My introduction undertakes to provide critical and cultural contexts, and demonstrates the heterotopian functions of imperial space. The early chapters offer detailed examinations of individual works or series—Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* (1930–1947), J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956). I trace the spatial relations of the nineteenth-century adventure novel within these texts and analyse the functions of the heterotopic spaces created by them. Chapters Five and Six respond to a flowering of children's literature during the decades following the Second World War (the "second golden age") through an analysis of particular types of British spaces, namely the home and the natural landscape, in a number of contemporary works by major writers of the period, including Mary Norton, Penelope Lively, Susan Cooper, and Alan Garner. Though these texts engage less directly with the end of empire than those discussed previously, through a series of contrapuntal readings I demonstrate the centrality to these novels of a changing discourse of nationhood and national space. Throughout the thesis I argue for the significance of children's literature to this shifting discourse of nationhood.

In undertaking to fill the gap in scholarship on the relationship between empire, nation, and children's fantasy writing in the context of decolonisation, this thesis also

contributes to larger contemporary debates about the construction of British national identity, imperial memory, and the place of immigrants in the national imaginary.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction: Fantasy, Space, and Children's Literature in Britain

This thesis takes for its subject the production of imperial and national spaces in a series of British children's fantasy novels published between 1930 and 1980, a period which witnessed the fragmentation of the British Empire. It argues that the presence of the empire in earlier British children's books was largely constructed in spatial terms. Drawing on recent critical work by Jed Esty, Ian Baucom and others, which examines British national identity in the wake of empire, this thesis argues that there exists a fundamental instability to definitions of "British" and imperial space and the boundaries between them. As I will show, the fantastic heterotopias created in the children's literature of this period provide conceptual spaces within which these unstable identities can be negotiated. Using major works of British children's fantasy, I will argue that there is a broad shift in focus from an outward-facing understanding of empire to a domestic and inward-facing one during this fifty year period. I will show that earlier works of fantasy, such as Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), owe much of their structure to the adventure novels of the nineteenth century which marked a narrative movement outward into imperial space; later works, like those of Penelope Lively and Alan Garner, demonstrate a slippage between imperial and domestic spaces. However, in each of the chapters that follows I will be tracing the presence of *both* impulses, and will show that the tension caused by an ambivalent and inherently contradictory understanding of imperial and domestic space underpins twentieth-century British children's literature.

The section below maps out some of the major connections between modern British children's literature, ideas of empire, and the fantasy genre, all of which I will develop in the chapters that follow.

## 1.1 Children's Literature, Space, and Empire

The tradition of British children's literature can be said to have been intertwined with imperial ambitions since its inception—though academic work on this subject has until now been limited to an analysis of texts produced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nineteenth century saw the growth of a popular literature for children in England, with books and magazines being produced for and read by a mass audience for the first time. Young

readers formed a big part of this audience; Richard Phillips attributes this to an increase in juvenile literacy due to the wider availability of primary education, general prosperity, and particularly high birth rates. He notes that the number of under-14s in Britain during this century “nearly doubled between 1841 and the turn of the century, rising from 5.7 to 10.5 million, and never falling below a third of the total population. Many of these young people—a higher proportion than ever before—went to school and learned to read” (Phillips, 50). The British Empire was at the height of its power in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it is therefore unsurprising that the literature of the period is rooted in this imperial context. Much of the children’s literature of the period is explicitly didactic in its conception—the hugely popular *Boys’ Own Paper*, for example, was established specifically as a wholesome alternative to the “penny dreadfuls,” and at least one of its aims was to equip its readers for the imperial project. Martin Green suggests that from the middle of the nineteenth century, children’s literature “was in effect captured by the aristomilitary caste [...] it focused its attention on the Empire and the Frontier; and the virtues it taught were dash, pluck and lion-heartedness, not obedience, duty and piety” (220), a description of the genre which reflects the centrality of empire and imperial concerns to the literature of the period. The supreme form of popular literature for children was the adventure story, a genre that took the whole world for its setting. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1709, gained immense popularity in the nineteenth century and formed the prototype for the “robinsonade”, a genre of books in which European characters, shipwrecked in remote parts of the world, learn to survive and cultivate the land (and the native population) to serve their purposes.<sup>1</sup> But the vogue for robinsonades was only part of a greater fascination with travel, maps, and the discovery and conquest of new lands—so that in this body of literature the process of empire-building was turned into a grand adventure. Amyas Leigh in Charles Kingsley’s *Westward Ho!* (1855) is described as “a symbol ... of brave young England longing to [...] discover and to traffic, to colonize and to civilize, until no wind can sweep the earth which does not bear the echoes of an English voice” (19) Nineteenth-century readers “continued to read the travel literature of earlier times, which made the explorer one of the great heroes of nineteenth century culture” (M. Green, 213). Part of my argument in this thesis is that, far from dying out with the age of empire, the adventure story continued to be central to the children’s literary

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<sup>1</sup> As Richard Phillips notes, while *Robinson Crusoe* had been successful and widely-read since its publication, this was nothing to the popularity it enjoyed in the nineteenth century. By the end of the century, at least 200 editions of the book had been published in Britain, with an average of more than two new editions each year during the Victorian period (Phillips, 23).

canon, and to exert a powerful imaginative influence upon later texts well into the twentieth century.

While the adventure story may have been the dominant tradition in children's literature in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was not the only one. Colin Manlove identifies as a major feature of English fantasy a "domestic and house-based action" (14), while Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn describe many mid- to late-nineteenth century British fantasies as "contained and bounded" (39) within the domestic sphere. However, while these texts may appear to contrast with the outwardly directed action of the imperial romance, the relationship between the two is far more complex than these critics would suggest. It is true that, as Levy and Mendlesohn note, the protagonist of Mary Louisa Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) never actually leaves her house, just as it is true that "even [J.M. Barrie's] Never-Never Land is situated in the bedroom" (39). Yet, if Barrie's Neverland, an imaginative play space made up of elements from adventure narratives, is contained within the Darling family nursery, the implication is not simply that *Peter and Wendy* is a domestic narrative, but rather that the domestic sphere is not free of these imperial narratives—i.e. the imperial and domestic spheres are far too intertwined to allow for the simple dichotomy between the two that these categorisations imply. Chapter Five of this thesis will examine in detail the nature of the relationship between the domestic space of the home and the "other" space of the empire, and will further trouble this dichotomy between these two types of spaces. Further, several of these domestic fantasies may be classed as "portal" or "portal-quest" fantasies (Levy and Mendlesohn 46; Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* xix) which, as I will argue in Chapter Three, derive their narrative structure from the imperial romance. In a later fantasy, C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the child protagonists never really leave the titular wardrobe, and yet the use of the fantastic portal allows them to explore, and subsequently rule, a strange new land.

Other forms of seemingly "domestic" popular children's literature too are rooted in imperial concerns—the boarding school story genre frequently presents public school as a form of preparation for the future administrators of empire. In Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899), life at school is shown to directly parallel life in the empire, particularly since the setting here is a military school. Similarly, in Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), Tom's education is intended to make him one of the "stalwart sons of the Browns" who have been

“leaving their mark in American forests and Australian uplands. Wherever the fleets and armies of England have won renown” (2). Other critics have amply demonstrated the presence of imperial ideology in Victorian children’s literature, and the function that the empire performs in all of these works—the invocation of these “American forests and Australian uplands” as sites of colonial uplift in a novel set entirely in Warwickshire. Even in later works in which imperialism is not the overt ideological goal of the text, one can trace an assumption of control over imperial space—the characters in P.G. Wodehouse’s *Mike* (1909), Elinor M. Brent-Dyer’s Chalet School series (published from 1925), or Elsie J. Oxenham’s Abbey books (published from 1914) may not leave Europe, but frequently mention family plantations in Kenya, Ceylon, or Argentina.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the implicit (and often explicit) dependence on imperial territory, from the late nineteenth century onwards we also see an increasing focus on the domestic landscape, the reasons for which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two. Jed Esty describes this “anthropological turn,” during which imperial protocols of understanding were turned inward to the British isles, as taking place at a time when “Englishness can no longer be defined against its imperial Outside” (15).<sup>3</sup> An idealised image of the English landscape was constructed, which, Alex Potts argues, was “a purely aestheticizing genre, geared to presenting the country and its inhabitants as enjoyable objects of urban experience” (165). The children’s literature of the period was an important site for this shift in focus. Richard Jefferies’ *Bevis* (1882), though written for adults, is one of the ur-texts of the genre of children’s books that would come to be known as Camping and Tramping fiction, and which generally presented a series of middle-class children exploring the English countryside. In fantasy literature, too, the domestic landscape was foregrounded—Colin Manlove describes an increasing tendency in the early twentieth century in which the fantasy worlds of children’s books are “equated with England itself, as a sea-girt land of nature and wonder” (40). Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906), in which a particular “fairy ring” in England becomes a link with a magical national past, is very much a part of this tradition, as are E. Nesbit’s time-slip fantasies *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) and *The House of Arden* (1908).

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<sup>2</sup> The latter two series were aimed at a young female audience; while analyses such as Martin Green’s overlook the existence of imperial popular fiction for girls, a considerable body of such work exists and indeed continued to be popular well into the twentieth century. See for example Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, *You’re a Brick, Angela!* (Gollancz, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> The difference between “England” or “English” and “Britain” or “British” is often elided in discussions of this idealised landscape, an issue that will be discussed further in the next two chapters.

Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons series (1930–1947), the subject of Chapter Two of this thesis, can be situated within all of these traditions, and has frequently been read both as the originary text of the camping and tramping genre and in relation to earlier adventure narratives.<sup>4</sup> It has not, however, been read in a sustained way as a work of fantasy literature, though critics have acknowledged the complex relationship between the realist and fantastic elements in the books.<sup>5</sup> My reading of the Swallows and Amazons books in the context of fantasy not only illuminates the functions of the spaces constructed within the series, but provides a means of recontextualising later British fantasy to which Ransome's books can now be seen as a precursor.

The image of an enchanted England described by Manlove is not limited to books set largely or partly in the “real” world. As I show in Chapters Three and Four, these images of enchanted Englands stray into the fantastic secondary worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and C.S. Lewis's Narnia series (1950–1956). While other critics have noted the frequent invocation of a “timeless rural England” (Esty 122) in the work of these authors,<sup>6</sup> my focus will be on the shifting position of this space within these secondary worlds. Although, as both Esty and Bird suggest, the impetus behind the turn to the domestic landscape formed part of an attempt to find “civilizational origins” (Esty 41) separate from the colonies, my analysis of these texts shows that the implications of locating national identity in the domestic space and localist heritage become increasingly fraught, in large part because the presence of empire is always already embedded in the British national space. This can easily be seen in a series of fantasies located within houses, which are discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Here, as I demonstrate, the country-house settings of T.H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946), Lucy Boston's Green Knowe series (1954–1976) and Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952) become the sites for a series of colonial encounters and negotiations with imperial history.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hazel Sheeky Bird, *Class, Leisure and National Identity in British Children's Literature 1918–1950* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Victor Watson, *Reading Series Fiction: From Arthur Ransome to Gene Kemp* (Routledge, 2000)

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Hunt, *Approaching Arthur Ransome* (Jonathan Cape, 1992) and Sarah Spooner, “Landscapes: ‘Going foreign’ in Arthur Ransome's *Peter Duck*” in Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (ed) *Children's Literature: New Approaches* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) for two perspectives. I discuss both in detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>6</sup> See Esty (2009), also Hazel Sheeky Bird, “The Pastoral Impulse and the Turn to the Future in *The Hobbit* and Interwar Children's Fiction” in Peter Hunt (ed) *J.R.R. Tolkien* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

However, the depiction of national space in the wake of the Second World War and the post-Windrush period underwent a series of changes. As James Procter has shown, anxiety over the immigration of non-white imperial subjects to Britain manifested itself in a series of images of the home under threat. The home and the nation were conflated here; this period of immigration from the colonies was known as the “open door” (Procter 22). Paul Gilroy suggests that in the decades following the British Nationality Act of 1948, the racial anxiety engendered by this period of immigration utilised a “language of war and invasion” which “is the clearest illustration of the way in which the discourses which together constitute ‘race’ direct attention to national boundaries, focusing attention on the entry and exit of blacks” (*There Ain’t No Black* 45). As I show in Chapters Five and Six, these anxieties located around domestic and national borders found their way into children’s fantasy as well. Penelope Lively’s *The House in Norham Gardens* (1974), Susan Cooper’s *The Dark is Rising* (1973) and Alan Garner’s *Elidor* (1965) all dramatise supernatural versions of the “doorstep encounters” between metropolitan citizen and former colonised subject described by Procter. These threats of home invasion have previously been read in the context of the Second World War, but an analysis of the ways in which they evoke and participate in the contemporary discourses around immigration and national identity has until now been neglected.<sup>7</sup>

Ian Baucom describes this discourse as part of a fundamental shift in the formation of British identity over the period under consideration. He notes that, for centuries, the territorial principle of *ius soli* (literally “the right of the soil”) was recognised as the ultimate source of British identity—to be born on British territory *was* to be British. As I discuss in more detail below, however, “British territory” was itself far from stable—at various points including England, the British Isles, and all British imperial territories. In some cases this continued even after the colonies had gained independence—the 1948 British Nationality Act conferred British subjecthood even upon the citizens of India and the Dominions. In the years following, however, and in the wake of immigration from the former colonies, Baucom claims that the construction of “British” identity “largely abandon[ed] spatial and territorial ideologies for a racial ‘discourse of loyalty’ and coidentity” (12). The period between 1960 and 1980 in particular saw a series of legal changes that increasingly redefined Britishness as a function of ancestry rather than space (Baucom 13). Thus, as Simon Gikandi shows, while “in the imperial period [...] the essence of a British identity was derived from the totality of all the people brought together by empire; in the postimperial period, in contrast, we find a

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, C. Butler, *Four British Fantasists* (Scarecrow, 2006).

calculated attempt to configure Englishness as exclusionary of its colonial wards” (71). Along with Gikandi, Paul Gilroy notes the extent to which this redefinition of the origins of British identity shifts attention to the national border; so that “the limits of ‘race’ have come to coincide so precisely with national frontiers” (*There Ain’t No Black* 46). As I show in Chapter Six, the landscape fantasies of the 1960s and 1970s are actively engaged with these discourses of immigration, race and national identity. C. Butler and Jane Suzanne Carroll have both identified the preponderance of metaphors of depth and stratification through which the presence of history is evoked in the landscape in these texts; my analysis connects these, along with a wider contemporary fascination with the geological history of the British Isles, and suggests a desire during this period for reconstructing Britain as a single geological entity. Analysing a set of fantasies published during this period, I examine the use of myth and history both in order to invest the landscape with meaning and to forge a narrative which unites the British Isles, and show that, per Gilroy, this has the effect of creating and drawing attention to the coasts of Great Britain; creating a notion of a Britain that is “bounded on all sides by the sea” (*There Ain’t No Black* 46). As I will demonstrate, this shift simultaneously relocates Britishness to the space of a single island, thus disowning the claims to that identity of the former and current empire, and positions Britain’s colonial wards as alien interlopers, threatening to violate Britain’s borders.

Over the half-century of fantasy texts analysed in this thesis, then, we see a shift in narrative focus from the outward-facing stance of the imperial adventure novel towards a more domestic fantasy which is concerned with defining the physical boundaries of Britain. In the fantasies of Ransome, Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis, whose works are discussed in the first half of this thesis, the relationship between the narrative and space is concretised in the form of the map; as indeed it is in the literary traditions of the adventure novel and the camping and tramping genre. The functions of the map in the books discussed here thus require further attention.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Mapping Empire

Maps have been included in books for almost as long as printed books have existed; including in versions of the Bible, Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) and Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726)

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<sup>8</sup> The books that make up Lewis’s Narnia series contain fewer maps than those of Tolkien and Ransome, but, as I will show, frequently take up a cartographic subject position in relation to the secondary world.

(Ekman, 14). As Simon Ryan notes, maps and globes have historically served as symbolic representations of power:

[T]he Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV is depicted holding a tripartite globe signifying political dominance (Harley and Woodward 1987: plate 10)—the thirteenth century Ebstorf *mappamundi* is structured by the body of Christ, whose left hand reaches to embrace even the twenty-four monstrous races of the antipodes (ibid.: 291, 310). The proprietorial relationship that the Emperor has with the globe suggests the picture acts as a projection of imperial power and offers an implicit argument that Charles IV is the rightful ruler of the globe he holds; the body of Christ in the Ebstorf map creates a world structurally dependent on Christ, and by extension on his earthly institution, the Church. (116)

In each of the cases above, the map symbolises knowledge of, and control over, the territory depicted by it. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, therefore, the map had considerable symbolic power in the context of empire. It is hardly surprising that maps should have become a staple in a genre so preoccupied with the relationship between space and power as the adventure novel. From the fourth printing of *Robinson Crusoe* onwards, many editions of the novel were published with a map of the world upon which Crusoe's journey was marked. In addition, it had marked upon it possible latitudes and longitudes for Crusoe's island. The map thus bolstered the book's presentation of itself as a factual account.

The map is an ideological tool precisely because of this claim to "fact". It presents itself as authoritative and objective, depicting the world as it really is. Maps "offer themselves as primarily mimetic, functional tools" (Ryan 115). Denis Wood notes that the idea of the map as merely "a representation of part of the earth's surface" is "a projection, as it were, of the map itself, *the map as it would like to be understood*" and, moreover, naturalizes and universalizes it, obscuring the map's origins in the rise of the state (18–19). The nineteenth-century child's relationship with maps was one that put the child in a position of authority over both the map and the world it represented. With the rise of children's culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one sees the popularity of "dissected maps", early jigsaw puzzles in which territorial representations of the world or the nation had to be pieced together. Marketed as educational aids, these maps, as Megan A. Norcia claims, "allowed users to continually rehearse the project of mapping the world by piecing together its parts" ("Puzzling" 5). Norcia further connects this to what Foucault describes as an eighteenth-



century desire “to tabulate, catalog, classify, and order the world into meaningful hierarchies” (“Puzzling” 2). The dissected map thus worked in tandem with the adventure novel in depicting (both visually and textually) the world as the birthright of the British child.

The adventure novel offers its child reader a similar participation in empire-building. In adventure novels like R.L. Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, maps exist within the narrative as important elements of the stories. These maps, however, are somewhat different to the detailed and authoritative maps described above. Rather than presenting themselves as objective indicators of truth, they are drawn by characters within the novels in order to pinpoint particular places of personal significance, and other characters are faced with the task of puzzling out the map as well as the landscape. However, the map always has a solution. The treasure map thus makes the territory both unknown and ultimately knowable, while the quest narrative presents the world (or at least the territory on the map) as a solvable puzzle. In this sense the quest story is rather like the dissected map in that it not only symbolically offers the reader control over its world, but also the chance to participate in the process of ordering that world.

Maps continued to enjoy a prominent place in children’s fiction even with the decline of the imperial adventure narrative. With the inward turn towards the British countryside in the early part of the twentieth century came the rise of the “camping and tramping” genre of novel, in which children explore and have adventures in the domestic, rather than imperial landscape. As Hazel Sheeky Bird shows (*National Identity* 121), these books frequently drew on narratives of imperial exploration, and sought to control the domestic landscape through the use of maps and mapping. Bird further notes the extent to which “cartographic literacy” was prioritised in the British educational system during the interwar period, and describes this as “the basis for a type of citizenship formed around a ‘geographical self’” (126); thus mapping was also here connected to a re-inscribing of national identity into the landscape. Maps and mapping play an essential role in the texts discussed in the early chapters of this thesis. Arthur Ransome’s child characters are cartographers themselves as well as readers of maps. J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* has as its paratexts maps of both types described above—the objective-seeming authoritative map of the landscape, and the treasure map that requires decoding. *The Hobbit* also laid the ground for the map of the secondary world. As I discuss in Chapter Three, the fantasy map as paratext would become a widespread feature of the genre.

If, in the 1930s, maps at the beginning of a book might have indicated that the book was in the camping and tramping or adventure traditions, within the next few decades they would also function as a marker of genre fantasy. Tolkien's inclusion of maps in his works contributed to the presentation of fantasy spaces as complete and internally consistent worlds, and in several of the fantasies that followed his work, as Farah Mendlesohn has shown, the map is utilised in order to "fix the interpretation of a landscape" (*Rhetorics* 14), much as the imperial map does, projecting an objective image of the landscape and placing the reader in a position of power.

Yet both Tolkien and Ransome trouble the assumption that mapping and naming can give the cartographer or the reader control over the space. The Swallows and Amazons discover that their attempts to apply the protocols of imperial mapping to a domestic landscape are fraught, and across the series, as I show through an analysis of the books' maps, the characters demonstrate an increasing unease with the power relation that mapping implies. On the other hand *The Hobbit*, I argue, undermines that power relationship. Both the landscape of Middle-earth itself and the information accessible on the maps are mutable and dynamic, making it impossible for the reader of the map to exert power upon the landscape.

The inclusion of maps by authors like Tolkien both signalled the books' affinity to the adventure genre and contributed to the presentation of fantasy spaces as complete and internally consistent worlds, but would soon become widespread enough to seem a cliché. Chapter Three will consider the implications of fantasy mapping with regard to Tolkien's Middle-earth and other "secondary world" fantasies, while Chapter Four will discuss the cartographic gaze of C.S. Lewis's Narnia books. However, Chapters Five and Six mark something of a departure—while maps continued to be ubiquitous in popular genre fantasy,<sup>9</sup> they are less visible in the British children's books of this period. I will address the significance of this omission in some detail. Chapter Five will examine the unmappable secondary-world landscape in Alan Garner's *Elidor*, while Chapter Six will demonstrate a shift from a cartographic gaze to forms of spatial knowledge that privilege depth.

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<sup>9</sup> Ekman provides evidence for the prevalence of maps in the genre through an extensive survey (22, 221–232).

### 1.3 Empire and the Postimperial

In the section above, I refer to “empire” and “the postimperial,” rather than “colonialism” and postcolonial.” “Colonialism” and “imperialism” are inextricably intertwined, and the terms are often conflated, even by postcolonial theorists. However, this project is concerned specifically with *imperialism* and its afterlives in the literature of the metropole. Robert J. C. Young makes a clear distinction between colonialism and imperialism, suggesting that while both concepts involve the subjugation of one group by another, they may occasionally even be contradictory practices. He sees colonialism as pragmatic and haphazard, while imperialism is “driven by ideology from the metropolitan centre and concerned with the assertion and expansion of state power” (16). Edward Said makes the same basic differentiation between colonialism and imperialism, but describes imperialism as merely the process of establishing and maintaining empire. Both critics make reference to a quotation from Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in order to pinpoint this difference in terms; early in Conrad’s novel, his narrator Marlow notes that “[t]he conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it’s the idea only” (Conrad 8). Imperialism, according to Young, is embodied in this “idea” (25). For Said, Marlow’s observation suggests that “the enterprise of empire depends on the idea of having an empire” (*Culture and Imperialism* 10). From both Said and Young, then, we see a distinct sense of “the British Empire” as a concept in British thought that pre-dates as well as opens up the possibility of British imperialism.

Ania Loomba offers a further distinction between “colonialism” and “imperialism” that is helpful to contemplate here. According to Loomba:

One useful way of distinguishing between [imperialism and colonialism] might be to separate them not in temporal but in spatial terms, and to think of imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. [...] Imperialism can function without formal colonies (as in United States imperialism today) but colonialism cannot. (37–38)

Like both Said and Young, Loomba suggests that imperialism is the process that sustains colonialism, but her grounding of this distinction in specifically *spatial* terms, something that is only implicit in the analysis of the other two writers, is of particular relevance to this project, with its focus on Britain and British space. To describe Britain as a “postcolonial”

nation is not strictly accurate and rather glib—imperialism, however, is relevant to the British context and the space of the metropole.

Whereas Said's interest is in the narratives which make empire possible, and which sustain its existence (in short, the presence of the "idea" in British literature and culture), the majority of the texts under discussion here are written at the point when the British empire itself no longer exists as a political entity. However, Said's contrapuntal reading provides a model for situating these texts within a larger discourse of empire. Drawing on Raymond Williams, Said refers to the "structures of feeling" that "support, elaborate and consolidate the practice of empire" (14). As this thesis will demonstrate, the *idea* of empire, empire *as* structure of feeling, continues into the postimperial world of the mid-twentieth century and beyond. The "general cultural sphere" in which Said sees imperialism as continuing to operate is the sphere with which colonial discourse analysis is concerned. In creating a general schema of colonial discourse Said makes it possible to analyse the ways in which imperial narratives are created in the coloniser's culture—following Said, my own work locates the traces of these imperial narratives in postimperial works and analyses their effects.

This also raises the question of what is meant in this thesis by "postimperial" or "after empire." It is impossible to precisely date the end of the British empire as a political entity, as this was (or is) a gradual process taking place over decades. Eric Hobsbawm, writing in 1987, places the "Age of Empire" between 1875 and 1914 (the start of the First World War), but suggests that though we "are no longer in it [we] do not know how much of it is still in us" (5), i.e. we are still living in the wake of empire. David Cannadine suggests that the process takes place over exactly half a century, beginning with the independence of India in 1947 and continuing until the return of Hong Kong to the Chinese government in 1997 (xiii). Bill Schwarz suggests that such historical milestones as the Suez crisis in 1956 and the collapse of the Central African Federation in 1963 are also important landmarks in the end of the empire, and notes that by the end of the 1960s "empire existed as little more than a memory" (8)—on the other hand, the continued existence of British Overseas Territories might indicate that the British Empire has not yet ended, though it has ceased to have significance as a political entity. Though acknowledging the impossibility of setting a fixed and universally agreed-upon date for the end of empire, I have chosen to consider a set of works written over the fifty-year period between 1930 and 1980; i.e. after the period of territorial expansion and

during that of imperial decline. The year 1930 also saw the Purna Swaraj declaration and Dandi March in the Indian subcontinent (an important moment in the shifting relationship between colony and metropole), while 1981 marks the implementation of the Nationality Act in Britain. I have used the phrase “postimperial” to refer to this literature because my focus is less on the political fragmentation of the empire and more on the persistence of the “idea” in the literature of the metropole. Said, who also uses the term, suggests that though in the present day, colonialism “has largely ended,” imperialism, by contrast, still exists “where it has always been, in a kind of general, cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (8). While the empire as an entity may no longer exist, the narratives that sustained it continue to inform British cultural production. I will demonstrate this largely through an analysis of the relationships to territorial space that are being constructed by the texts under discussion.

Though, as I have shown, the idea of empire has a long history in British culture and thought, it is not always clear what is being referred to by the term “the British empire.” Robert J. C. Young notes that, even at the height of British imperialism, there was a divide in the ways in which the empire was conceived of, calling it “a doubled or split enterprise never reconciled to itself”:

[...] there was a wide discrepancy between those such as Disraeli who thought of imperialism primarily in terms of the Empire in the East, that is India, and those such as Dilke who conceived of it in terms of a Greater Britain, a federation of English-speaking colonists. [...] much British thinking about imperialism can be shown to be the product of the serious tension between the Anglo-Saxon alliance view of empire, and the rule of the various subject races. (35)

Here, Young demonstrates two separate and simultaneous understandings of the territory which the British Empire occupied. On the one hand it could be seen as “a Greater Britain,” a single, vast, political entity of which the British Isles (or, in practice, England) were the metropole or centre. On the other, it could be considered as an “other” space, a separate political and territorial entity (“the colonies”) subordinate to Britain. Consequent to this are separate and simultaneous understandings of the domestic national space as inclusive or exclusive of empire, so that imperial contraction, as Esty shows, is conflated with national decline (3). This confusion of terms has consequences for the literature produced in this context. These two intertwined ideas of empire map onto two separate understandings of

space and are in effect a version of the two impulses that structure this thesis: There/Back Again or Other/Self. In the sections following, I will address in more detail some of the implications of these presentations of space.

#### **1.4 Empire and Heterotopia**

In order to discuss the functions performed by these spaces, I draw on Michel Foucault's notion of "other spaces" or "heterotopias". These are imagined ("even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" [24]) spaces within particular cultures which "are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24), and perform particular functions in relation to the sites which they reflect. Among the functions he lists, those of particular relevance to my analysis include the space of the "utopia," which presents a vision of a perfected society; the "crisis heterotopia," such as the boys' boarding school or the young woman's honeymoon trip, which provide spaces for sexual maturity to take place "elsewhere"; the "heterotopia of deviation," which provides a space for individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the cultural norm; and the "heterochrony," which is a break with the present time. Foucault suggests that some colonised spaces have "played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias" (27). In support of this point he cites the attempts by Puritans and Jesuits to form perfect societies in North and South America—one might also consider the historical creation of penal colonies as an example of the construction of colonised territories as heterotopias of deviation. In both of these examples, the *physical* territory of the colony performs the specific functions required by it of the metropole.

However, these analyses are limited to, as Foucault puts it, the level of the general organization of terrestrial space—a *physical* ordering of spaces. But in addition to this, the *imagined* space of the empire too performed several heterotopian functions. Mary Louise Pratt, whose work is discussed in some detail in Chapter Four, describes the "utopian" imagination of the anti-conquest, which "[asserts] a harmless hegemonic vision that installs no apparatus of domination" (33–34). Simon Gikandi, noting the prevalence in postcolonial

studies of travel narratives and “journeys into the space of the other” argues that “the trope of travel generates narratives that are acutely concerned with self-realization in the spaces of the other, that the European excursion (and incursion) into the colonial space is one of the more important vehicles by which [...] Europe and its others are recreated” (8), and further that “the colonized space was instrumental in the invention of Europe” (6). Bruce McLeod shows that, in the eighteenth century, writers like Jonathan Swift and Daniel Defoe, in setting their critiques of domestic British society in fictionalised other spaces, “use an imperialized world as a sounding-board for situations and issues affecting the British isles [...] their imaginary is rooted in an interactive Atlantic culture system” (167). As I note above, the nineteenth-century adventure novels discussed earlier constructed an ideal British hero who had the “qualities of manliness” (Webb 51) required for imperial rule, and who developed these qualities through an encounter with the imperial space. The empire, then, provided a space in which the development of the literary hero could take place; functioning as “a testing ground for the manly European subject” (Daly 64). As in Foucault’s own example of the boarding school, which provides a space for young men to transform into adults, the imagined imperial space of the adventure novel thus becomes a crisis heterotopia in which the development of young men into imperial subjects takes place.

These nineteenth-century children’s books were written during a period of imperial expansion and have an open ideological agenda. However, as Said notes, the sense of the rest of the world as existing for the use of the British has a much wider application throughout British literature. What he calls his contrapuntal readings work to reveal the ways in which even British literature that is not ostensibly about empire still rests upon the assumption of the imaginative availability of the world—the world is presented as a series of plantations and colonies that exist mainly to serve the narratives of British protagonists, or wild spaces in which their characters are forged.

Foucault’s and Said’s understandings of the uses of imperial space have important implications for my thesis argument on children’s fantasy fiction in the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Said’s work suggests that a children’s book written towards (or after) the end of empire comes from a tradition of literature which both explicitly and implicitly rests on narratives of empire and the availability of imperial space—what Said describes as the “codified, if only marginally visible, presence in fiction, very much like the servants in grand

households and in novels, whose work is taken for granted [...] usefully there” (75) and the “hierarchy of spaces” (69) upon which this availability rests. Foucault reminds us that these imperial spaces perform specific functions with regard to the metropole and its literature. I also draw on Pratt, whose work on the colonial encounter is couched in spatial terms—the “contact zone” (4). As I show throughout this thesis, postimperial British literature has to create other spaces, other heterotopias, to perform these functions, and an analysis of these literary spaces makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the shifting British identities that have forged them.

The fantasy genre makes possible the construction of these “other spaces.” Fantastic literature has a long tradition of creating worlds which exist separately from or in complex relation to our own reality, and has even occasionally acknowledged the link between the fantastic and the imperial space.<sup>10</sup> What has thus far been lacking in criticism of the genre is a sustained examination of *how* these worlds work in relation to the contexts which produce them. For example, Farah Mendlesohn’s *Rhetorics of Fantasy* maps out a series of possible relationships between the fantastic and the “real” across the genre, but a full analysis of the *functions* of the spaces thus created is not the focus of that work. Gary K. Wolfe describes fantasy as occupying a narrative “geography of desire” (which he contrasts with the “geography of reason,” which he attributes to science fiction, and the “geography of anxiety,” which he attributes to horror), but here too the sources of this “desire” and the ways in which it shapes the narrative are outside the scope of his analysis—though the use of the spatial metaphor is in itself illuminating. It is only relatively recently that fantasy criticism has acknowledged the centrality of space to the genre: In recent years Michael Saler has read the proliferation of fantastic “other spaces” in the twentieth century as a response to modernity,<sup>11</sup> while Lisa Fletcher has recently proposed a model of genre fiction that is based in the “apparently natural link [...] between a place and a story” (2).

Finally, several of these fantasies draw a connection between the fantastic heterotopia and childhood itself. Writing on a phenomenon that he refers to as the “islanding” of children,

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* (Harvest, 1975), which contains a conversation between Lewis, Kingsley Amis and Brian Aldiss on the subject of “Unreal Estates”, and which declares that “a lot of the eighteenth century equivalent of science fiction [...] is placed in Australia or similar unreal estates” (86).

<sup>11</sup> For Saler, “Fantastic virtual worlds of the imagination emerged [...] to secure the marvels that a disenchanting modernity seemed to undermine, while remaining true to the tenets intellectuals ascribed to modernity at the time” (6-7).



John R. Gillis suggests that childhood itself is a sort of heterotopia. Adults, he claims, have “constructed mythical landscapes that sustain childhood in its idealized forms, even when it is no longer sustainable in the real world” (317). One might think of the closed world of Barrie’s Neverland, where characters neither age nor change; Lewis’s Narnia, from which the Pevensie children are barred once they are deemed too old; or even, though a few privileged adults are admitted, the shared imaginative world of the children in the *Swallows and Amazons* books. Much as the imperial heterotopia of the adventure story served to construct the ideal British child, the fantastic heterotopia here becomes a means of constructing and preserving a nostalgic childhood.

### **1.5 “Prizing” children’s literature and selection of texts**

This thesis traces a set of themes and concerns centred on landscape in books that span a period of fifty years. Since it is obviously impossible to cover every popular children’s fantasy published in Britain over this time, and since it is my intention to examine broader national concerns, I have adhered closely to “classic” or canonical works in my selection of texts. The definitions of fantasy applied here are broad ones—while the majority of these books were published as works of fantasy and are generally understood as such, in some cases, such as those of Ransome’s *Swallows and Amazons* series or Penelope Lively’s *The House in Norham Gardens* (1974), it has been necessary to explain my reasoning in greater detail. The question of canonicity is a more vexed one, particularly since the books discussed here (children’s fantasies) belong to two separate, though overlapping, categories.

One useful indicator of canonicity has been the Carnegie Medal, and the majority of the books and authors discussed here are Carnegie awardees. Kenneth Kidd, in his work on the Newbery Medal (the earlier American counterpart to the Carnegie), enumerates the various functions of literary awards in the public sphere, including those of canon-formation, marketing, and even simply keeping books in print. Kidd describes the Newbery as “if not exactly a canon, [...] part of the canonical architecture of children’s literature” (169), quoting James English’s contention that the literary prize “*is* cultural practice in its quintessential contemporary form” (English 26, emphasis in original). Lucy Pearson adds that in the case of the Carnegie Medal, the fact that librarians play a major role in the judging of the award further embeds these books in the canon, as they are well represented in libraries (“Prizing”). In recent years, the award has encouraged the “shadowing” of its shortlist in schools across

the country, so that the books are widely read and discussed within an institutional framework.

The history of the Carnegie Medal indicates its appositeness for a project like this one. The medal rewards British children's literature, but as I have already shown, the category "British" is an unstable one in the twentieth century. The criteria for the eligibility for the award underwent multiple changes in the years following its establishment in 1936; originally claiming to reward "the best book published for children in the British Empire" in the past year, by 1941 the "British Empire" had changed to "England." As Owen Dudley Edwards has noted, this change was probably more in keeping with a general tendency to conflate "Britain" and "England" rather than a deliberate attempt to exclude Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish writers from contention (Andrew Carnegie, the philanthropist after whom the medal was named, had been born in Scotland); nevertheless, the wording remained until 1944.<sup>12</sup> At this point, the eligibility criteria specified that the winner must be "a British subject domiciled in the United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland)" and that the book must have been published in Britain (Edwards 248–249). The current eligibility criteria, by contrast, merely require the book to have been published in the United Kingdom first, or within three months of its first publication. Further, Lucy Pearson identifies in the first twenty years of award-winners "a deep preoccupation not simply with Britain as a nation, but with the land itself," from Arthur Ransome's *Pigeon Post*, the first winner, onwards ("Prizing"). Thus the award is, from its inception, innately tied to a shifting sense of British identity.

Not all of the authors discussed here are Carnegie winners—and not all Carnegie winners may be considered part of a children's fantasy canon. Susan Cooper, whose *Dark is Rising* sequence is discussed in detail in Chapter Six, has never won the award, though she has been shortlisted (for *Ghost Hawk*, in 2014). Cooper's work, however, has been recognised by other literary prizes—books in the sequence have won the (American) Newbery Medal, the (Welsh) Tir-na-n-Og Award, and parts of the sequence have been adapted for film and radio. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* also famously did not win the award in 1937—a decision which Keith Barker describes as controversial (43)—yet few would question its influence, either as a canonical children's text or as a fantasy novel. Meanwhile, Carnegie-winning works such as

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<sup>12</sup> Edwards attributes the change in the award criteria at this point to the fact that Eric Linklater, a "Welsh-born Scottish nationalist parliamentary candidate and Orcadian resident" was the favourite to win the award (249).

Sheena Porter's *Nordy Bank* and William Mayne's *A Grass Rope* are no longer in print.<sup>13</sup> The Carnegie is thus far from being an infallible marker of "classic" status, but in selecting Carnegie-winning authors as well as major fantasists, I have endeavoured to cast as wide a net as possible.

## 1.6 Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter Two of this thesis I examine Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons series, published between 1930 and 1947. While these books are not generally regarded as works of fantasy literature, I demonstrate that the series as a whole not only belongs within the fantastic tradition, but that its conflation of imperial and fantastic space (through its preoccupation with maps and mapping, as well as with the tradition of adventure fiction) prefigures and provides a framework for reading the later landscape fantasies of the 1960s and 1970s. I show that the characters' attempts to imaginatively superimpose the terrain of the imperial adventure story upon the domestic space of the Lake District creates a space which is simultaneously both England and Empire, which I read as a response to Britain's changing relationship with imperial space. While at the beginning of the series the characters demonstrate a longing for imperial mastery over their surroundings, the later books, as I will prove, display an increasing unease with such mastery, alongside an increased desire for a connection with the domestic landscape and history.

Chapter Three focuses on J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), and the use of the secondary world as a heterotopic space (and heterochronic, since Middle Earth also provides a mythology for England). Reading the book in the context of the adventure tradition, I argue that the fantastical terrain of Middle-earth fulfils a similar function to the (real world) imperial space in earlier iterations of the tradition, and suggest a direct link between the contraction of British imperial space and the flowering of secondary world fantasy in the mid-twentieth century. However, drawing upon the work of Adam Roberts and Verlyn Flieger as well as

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<sup>13</sup> Mayne's legacy as a children's writer was largely destroyed following his conviction in 2004 for several assaults on young girl fans. However, as Julia Eccleshare points out in an obituary for the author, his work was "never widely popular and sometimes thought of as inaccessible for his young readers", though it was critically acclaimed.

making a study of the maps and riddles in the book, I suggest that Tolkien's work, written in the 1930s, cannot assume the same mastery over the landscape of the imperial adventure novel, and that the maps included in the text allow a greater degree of ambiguity. I show that, despite the detailed nature of Tolkien's world-building, the landscape of Middle-earth as presented in this book constantly resists attempts to impose a single interpretation upon it. I further examine the claim that Tolkien's Middle-earth constitutes a "mythology for England," discussing it as a heterochronic space.

Chapter Four examines C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–56). Using Mary Louise Pratt's formulation of the anti-conquest in imperial travel writing, I suggest that Narnia is presented throughout the series as a colonised space which despite this is able to simultaneously absolve the reader/viewer of imperial designs. However, this is not the only function that this space performs; it also works as an idealised version of Britain, and as a space for working out British identity. These two paradoxical impulses serve as an example of what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the "Janus-faced" nature of narratives of nationhood. In the case of Narnia, as I will show, this "wavering between vocabularies" is a result of two simultaneous understandings of empire that are in play throughout the text.

Chapter Five marks a shift in methodology. While in the earlier chapters I have focused my attention on single texts or series, the mid-twentieth century also sees a "dramatic expansion" (Pearson, *Making* 3) in the publication of children's books. In order to show that several preoccupations and concerns are shared across the genre, Chapters Five and Six both analyse particular themes in several significant contemporary children's books. Chapter Five considers the space of the house in children's fantasy. I begin with a section on the country house, which looks at various major works of fantasy from the period, including T.H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose*, Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* and Lucy Boston's Green Knowe series, in the context of Ian Baucom's statement that "a postimperial England is itself resident to lingering zones of imperial confusion," and that the country house is one such space. Moving on to a broader discussion of the space of the home, and drawing on work by Joanna de Groot about the material culture of empire and the extent to which British domesticity was dependent upon it, I draw a parallel between the house's links with the empire and the presentation of the house as a portal to other worlds in the fantasy novels under consideration. I read the house as simultaneously a microcosm of empire and a domestic space, and thus a

useful arena for the working-out of issues of national identity. This is particularly the case during a period which saw the establishment of the commonwealth as well as widespread immigration to Britain from the colonies. Through this chapter I demonstrate that even those books whose plots involve secondary worlds are increasingly rooted in the domestic sphere during this period and that the home, rather than the “other” space of the empire, becomes the contested site.

Chapter Six considers a series of landscape fantasies written in the 1960s and 1970s. As I show in the previous chapter, the focus of children’s fantasy had at this point shifted from the “other” space to the domestic. Drawing on Jed Esty’s work I discuss the ways in which, in these texts, the landscape is “reenchanted” and portrayed as a space in which myth and national history are embodied. I go on to discuss the Arthur myth in particular, and its connections to the British landscape. Taking as a framework Ian Baucom’s contention that the location of national identity in this period shifts from “place” to “race,” I demonstrate that these conflicting strands are a constant presence in the landscape fantasy. Contrasting these novels with the earlier tradition of landscape fiction for children, I show that the relationship of the characters to the land becomes increasingly uneasy, and the landscape itself becomes increasingly unhomely.

In my Conclusion I will demonstrate that, though the loss of empire is rarely the explicit subject of mid-twentieth century British children’s fantasy, it is central to the ways in which that literature is conceived. Drawing out the argument that runs through the thesis I will show that even as the focus of British children’s fantasy shifts towards the local landscape of the British Isles, the relationship between landscape and national identity becomes increasingly uncomfortable as the two contrary notions of space converge upon the same landscape. Finally, I will situate this thesis within larger debates around fantasy, the British children’s literary canon, and the space of postimperial Britain.

## Chapter 2. Unmapping Empire: Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons Series

Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* series consists of twelve books published between 1930 and 1947, a time period which makes them contemporaneous with several anti-colonial movements, the Second World War, and the decolonisation of British India. The books are loosely connected, each describing the holiday adventures of at least one of three families of children: the Walkers, John, Susan, Titty, and Roger (named the "Swallows" after their boat); the Blacketts, Nancy and Peggy (named the "Amazons" after their boat) and the Callums, Dick and Dorothea ("the Ds"). Most of the books are set in England; however, through a series of shared imaginative games, the children are able to project onto and overwrite their local landscape with other imagined geographies, gleaned from the imperial adventure narratives with which they are all familiar. Over the course of the series, as I will argue, Ransome interrogates the narrative possibilities of this imperial space during a historical moment in which the assumption that the space of the colonies is available to the British child is increasingly under threat. An analysis of the maps included in the books further indicates an increasing discomfort within the series with the dynamics of power inherent in imperial mapping, so that in the later books the map actively withholds information from the reader. Taking into account the complexities of genre and how it operates between the texts, I offer a reading of the series which reveals it to be an extended discussion of narrative possibility after empire, and one which increasingly relegates narratives of imperial space to the realm of the fantastic.

The *Swallows and Amazons* books may seem an odd inclusion in a thesis dedicated to works of fantasy. With the publication of this series, Ransome is generally agreed to have created an entirely new genre of children's literature—Geoffrey Trease describes him as having "deflected the stream of fiction into new channels" (139), and John Rowe Townsend claimed that the books had given "a new direction and impetus to English children's writing" (184), while Victor Watson credits him with being the originator of the "camping and tramping" genre of children's books. However, genre is a particularly vexed question within

the context of this series. This is the case in large part because the series lacks *internal* consistency, with different books appearing to bear different relationships towards the same shared “reality”. The critics quoted above are usually referring to the more realist narratives within the series and, as will be discussed later in the chapter, have largely failed to account for the relationship between the real and fantastic elements in the series. Yet, as I will show, fantasy is not only inherent in the books’ construction of space, but the series itself is significant in the history of British children’s fantasy in the twentieth century. This chapter will, therefore, begin by examining the books and their presentation of physical space in the contexts of imperial narratives and “national fictions”, and will further establish that they posit the fantastic heterotopia as an important site for negotiating the interplay between these two conflicting constructions of space. It will go on to offer the first reading of the series as a pioneering text of British children’s fantasy in the twentieth century.

## 2.1 Imperial Ambitions

In the opening scenes of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the narrator, Marlow, describes a childhood spent imagining the potential of the blank spaces on a map. He writes,

“Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, ‘When I grow up I will go there.’ [...] But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.

“True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. [...]” (9-10)

Central to this scene is the image of the child, whose future potential is aligned with the sense of possibility in the empty spaces on the map. It is the *child* here, rather than the adult Marlow and his companions, who features as the empire-builder, and whose role it is to “dream gloriously over” and transform the unmapped space. Jo-Ann Wallace suggests that the concept of the child is itself a “necessary precondition of imperialism”, noting that the spread of European imperialism also coincides with “the consolidation of an enormously

contradictory discourse surrounding ‘the child’ as, on the one hand, a sentimentalized wisdom figure and, on the other, national human capital, responsive to careful husbanding and investment” (176). For Wallace, this discourse of childhood not only makes empire “thinkable” (since constructions of children and “natives” so easily slip into one another), but much of the work of empire-building is displaced onto the figure of the child, so that the ideological impetus towards empire underlies the children’s fantasy of the late nineteenth century as well as the more overtly imperialist adventure novel. It is clear that the “child” invoked by Marlow’s speech is embedded in imperial discourse; his is, as Richard Phillips notes, “specifically the dream of a white boy growing up in an age of empire” (3).

Also central to this scene is Marlow’s anxiety that the empire will become unavailable to his imagination once the “blank spaces” have been exhausted. Speaking as an older man, he goes on to complain that “the glamour’s off”; the “glories of exploration” have been replaced by a more sordid reality. An understanding of empire as romantic or heroic is thus relegated to childhood. *Heart of Darkness* is never directly invoked in the *Swallows and Amazons* series, and is very different in tone to the imperial adventures with which the Walker children seem to be familiar. However, “[t]he works of Joseph Conrad” do feature in a list of “Books about Lakes and Pirates” created by Arthur Ransome as recommended reading for children who had enjoyed his books (Hardyment 220), and as this chapter demonstrates, the series as a whole shares several of the concerns identifiable within the paragraph above. While *Swallows and Amazons* begins with its characters “dreaming gloriously over” the possibilities of exploration, the filling-in of blank spaces becomes one of the central concerns of the early books. As the series progresses, the Walkers and Blacketts discover that not only are the processes of empire less pleasant than they have realised, but that changing geopolitics likewise affect their imaginative opportunities.

*Swallows and Amazons* opens with the final lines from John Keats’ “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer”.

Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star’d at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look’d at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.



Keats' poem celebrates George Chapman's translations of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The poem is therefore one of literary discovery, described in metaphors evoking the age of exploration—of astrological and territorial discoveries. The reference is to Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador, and this allusion makes it clear that the form of discovery being invoked is one related to territory and possession. Standing at the very opening of the *Swallows and Amazons* books, these quoted lines are the first entry point into a series which is in constant engagement with the literature of empire. Whereas Keats's literary discovery is mediated through metaphors of spatial discovery, the Walker children's project—their discovery and attempted colonisation of the territory of the Lake District—will be mediated through literature at every stage. However, both the poem and the children's games of exploration are dependent on an image of territorial space that is discoverable, colonisable, and claimable. In short, what I have already described as "imperial space".

Keats's image of the explorer surveying the landscape from above is one which recurs throughout Romantic and Victorian imperial narratives. Mary Louise Pratt describes this phenomenon of "promontory description" as "the monarch-of-all-I survey" scene, and suggests that, through this device, a particular relation of mastery is constructed between the viewer and what is viewed; the viewer "has the power if not to possess, at least to evaluate this scene" (204–205). Keats's poem invokes one such image; the reader of *Swallows and Amazons* will soon witness another.<sup>1</sup> Early in the book we learn that the Walker children (or "Swallows") have a "Darién" of their own, from which they survey the local landscape, and from which they first catch sight of an island on the lake and immediately assume a relationship of possession towards it: "It was not just an island. It was *the* island, waiting for them. It was their island" (17).

The Walkers have arrived in the Lake District for a family holiday, and explore this unfamiliar territory by imaginatively placing themselves in narratives gleaned from the literature of the age of empire—including stories of shipwrecks, conflicts with pirates and naval battles. Their experience of the landscape is thus mediated entirely through these

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<sup>1</sup> So prevalent in imperial narratives is this scene of the colonist surveying new spaces that Keats seems to have confused two instances of it—Vasco Núñez de Balboa, rather than Cortés, was the conquistador who travelled to present-day Panama and looked upon the Pacific Ocean.

imperial narratives, which follow an outward trajectory into imperial space. This is made clear in the scenes in which the children pack and set sail for the island. The launching of the boat, for example, becomes an opportunity for historical re-enactment. Titty suggests to her mother that she “Come along. Do. You can be Queen Elizabeth going aboard the ships at Greenwich that were sailing to the Indies” (25). That their play is literary in its origin is reinforced by an early scene, prior to the Walkers’ voyage to Wild Cat Island, when the children pack a small library, featuring the texts they consider necessary.

Titty took *Robinson Crusoe*. “It tells you just what to do on an island,” she said. John took *The Seaman’s Handybook*, and Part Three of *The Baltic Pilot*. Both books had belonged to his father, but John took them with him even on holidays. Mate Susan took *Simple Cooking for Small Households*. (31)

This scene has generally been read as an indicator of the children’s characters—John and Susan are associated with practical manuals (and decidedly gendered roles), while Titty, the most imaginative member of the group, takes a novel. However, the choice of novel is significant here. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) enjoyed enormous popularity in the nineteenth century and was a seminal text in the genre of the adventure story (Phillips 23). In particular, it formed the prototype for the “robinsonade”, a genre of books in which European characters, shipwrecked in remote parts of the world, learn to survive and cultivate the land (and often the native population) to serve their purposes. As Edward Said notes, it is “[t]he prototypical modern realistic novel [...] and certainly not accidentally it is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island” (xii). Read in an imperial context, Titty’s observation that it “tells you just what to do on an island” is justified—the book provides a model for colonisation. It is also the novel most frequently invoked in *Swallows and Amazons*, particularly by Titty, who spends an entire chapter pretending to be a shipwrecked sailor. But *Robinson Crusoe* is not the only text to which the book is indebted. The children’s adventures involve the finding of buried treasure and an adversarial relationship with a man named “Captain Flint”, closely following the plot of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883), as well as alluding to several other tropes of the broader genre. The prominence of these imperial narratives in the children’s lives is made particularly clear in a scene towards the end of the book when, as the children’s campsite faces a fierce storm, they choose to pretend that they are experiencing a shipwreck. What follows is an extended conversation among the children as they draw upon a common

vocabulary gleaned from the adventure tradition in order to sustain their shared imaginative game. We are told that:

Nobody could go to sleep. They became shipwrecked sailors.

“Both our masts went by the board,” said Captain Nancy.

“And before that the mizen was struck by lightning,” said Captain John.

“Did you see the blue lights flickering on the ends of the spars?” said Nancy. “That was before the mizen was struck.”

[...]

“And the waves were breaking over the ship,” said Titty, “and she was going down by the head with every soul on board. Someone had killed an albatross.”

“Pieces of eight, pieces of eight,” shouted the parrot.

“Yes. She was full of them,” said Titty. “That’s what made her sink so fast.”

“We launched the boats,” said Nancy, “and then the ship went down and we were alone on the deep.” (476)

The section quoted above contains references to R. L. Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” as well as emulating popular shipwreck narratives. The ability of the children to enter into the game wholly suggests a deep familiarity and shared understanding of the genre of the imperial adventure. The later books in the series continue this engagement with narratives of empire. The children’s adoption of “native”, “explorer”, and “pirate” lifestyles in the course of their adventures are all structured by their reading and their shared knowledge of this body of literature. By reinventing the local landscape in this way, they are able to camp on desert islands and war with pirates (*Swallows and Amazons*), go climbing in the Himalayas (*Swallowdale*), race to the North Pole (*Winter Holiday*), go prospecting for gold (*Pigeon Post*), and wage war on “savages” (*Secret Water*). The third book in the series, *Peter Duck*, discussed later in this chapter, is largely a pastiche of *Treasure Island*.

While all the literary sources discussed thus far have been fictional ones, it should be noted that the books taken by John and Susan to Wild Cat Island are works of nonfiction. Hazel Sheeky Bird has noted that books on the subjects of exploration and geography were widely recommended to children well into the twentieth century; Kathleen Lines’ *Four to Fourteen: A Library of Books for Children* (1950), for example, contained an entire section

on this subject, while W.C. Berwick Sayers' *Books for Youth* (1936) recommended forty-two books in a section on "Travel and Adventure" (Sheeky, "Camping and Tramping" 123). Ransome's own list of recommended works for children who had enjoyed his books included, among several works of popular fiction, the *Voyages* of Richard Hakluyt (Phillips 5–6, Hardyment 220). Fiction and nonfiction do not sit in opposition to one another here—fictional narratives like *Robinson Crusoe* (which was based in part on the life of a real shipwreck survivor, Alexander Selkirk, and which is filled with a wealth of realistic practical detail) are invested with the authority to "tell you just what to do", whereas nonfictional accounts of travel are given the gloss of adventure. This continuity between the fictional and nonfictional aspects of imperial imagination can be seen in the characters of John and Titty Walker. The two children may seem almost opposites at times ("John was thinking of the sailing, wondering whether he really remembered all that he had learnt last year [...] Titty was thinking of the island itself, of coral, treasure and footprints in the sand" [10]), but an exchange between them in *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* is an illuminating example of the ways in which these practical and romantic approaches to exploration are often in accord.

[John] told himself secretly that he had just sailed the *Goblin* from Dover and was waiting to take the tide up the river.

"John," said Titty. "Where've we come from?"

John started. It was as if she had heard him speak his thought out loud.

"River Plate," he said. Dover seemed too near, if Titty also was thinking they had come in from the sea.

"Months on the voyage," said Titty. "Isn't it lovely to be in home waters at last?" (94)

At moments such as this one, the two sides of imperial history that the children represent, the romantic and the practical, corresponding to the adventure narrative and the nonfiction work, complement and reinforce one another. Indeed, John's adherence to sail over steam aligns him with a romantic naval tradition. A more modern vision of imperial exploration is introduced in *Winter Holiday* via the character of Dick Callum, whose primary interest is in the fields of science and natural history. Dick, like John, is a reader of nonfiction. In *Winter Holiday* he takes on the role of astronomer in the children's games, while in *Pigeon Post* he features as the geologist. In *Great Northern?*, his stint as an ornithologist nearly leads to disaster.

Mary Louise Pratt has described in detail the process by which developing scientific disciplines in Europe intersected with the processes of empire. Not only did scientific expeditions become a means of expanding territorial control (23), but they also formed part of a systematising of nature that, she suggests, created a new “planetary consciousness” in European thought. As she asserts, “The finite totality of these representations or categories constituted a ‘mapping’ not just of coastlines or rivers, but of every visible square, or even cubic, inch of the earth’s surface” (30). It is probably coincidental that Ransome’s Lake District novels in particular appear to follow a similar trajectory –from naval exploration (*Swallows and Amazons*) to mapping the interior (*Swallowdale*), to scientific and geological expeditions (*Winter Holiday* and *Pigeon Post*). In all of these books, it is by gaining, and more importantly, producing knowledge about the terrain that the children exert control over it. In the earlier books in particular, this production of knowledge takes place through the device of the map.

As with Conrad’s young Marlow, the Walker children’s fascination with and performance of imperial narratives is concretised in the form of the map. Maps and mapping are central to the *Swallows and Amazons* series; they are both an important part of the books’ plots (as in several of the books the children’s explicit aim is to map the territory) and an essential aspect of the books’ illustrations and paratexts. All of the books have maps as their endpapers. The first edition of *Swallows and Amazons* had for its dust jacket a map of the book’s imagined territory drawn by Simon Spurrier. This map has been frequently reproduced in later editions of the book. Spurrier’s map features an elaborate cartouche and compass rose, a fanciful depiction of the North Wind, and in the lake itself an old-fashioned ship and a whale. This is a map which signals its affinity to the classic texts of the age of exploration; its sources are literary ones (Cooper and Priestnall 254). Thus the map becomes a marker of genre, signifying the text’s roots in the adventure tradition, even as it serves as a tool to help the reader navigate the imagined landscape. However, Spurrier’s is not the only map to be printed with the book; in some later editions, it was replaced by a less elaborate map drawn by Ransome himself (and most editions of the book now feature both). While Spurrier’s map alludes to the book’s literary antecedents, Ransome’s map draws attention to

the children's own map-making practices within the text—the book credits its illustrations to “the Author with the help of Miss Nancy Blackett”.

Hazel Sheeky Bird notes that camping and tramping novels such as this one often sought to negotiate control over the territory through the use of maps. The device of the map was used “to either gain power over the countryside or to convince [the protagonists] that they belong to it and it to them” (*National Identity* 89). This desire for power or ownership over the landscape is seen most clearly in the first book of the series, when the Walker children arrive in the Lake District and decide to lay claim to the territory. Mapping and knowledge are seen to be intertwined here, as John plans to “make a chart of our own [...] and every year we'll put in the part we have explored until we know it all” (71). In *Swallowdale*, the second book, this desire for mapping and mastery over the landscape has not abated. On their first day in the area, Titty suggests that they follow the beck upstream “to its source and put it on our map” (43). Her desire to explore is, like Marlow's, described in terms of “all those blank spaces on the map” (53), and shortly afterwards, when she finds the valley that she will name “Swallowdale”, her first thought is “wishing she had her map with her, to mark in it the stream and the newly discovered valley” (69). At the end of the book, with the remainder of the holidays stretching before them, she is glad that “we've got a good lot to put on our map already” (610). As discussed in the previous chapter, the connection between mapping and possessing territory played a major role in British imperial history. The Walker children's desire to possess the local land is clear from the beginning of the series, when they see the island and immediately claim it for their own, without ever having set foot upon it. The children's project of claiming the island and mapping the countryside surrounding them is, then, an imperial act. Not only do the children wish to claim the land, but they exert power upon it by remaking it to suit their own particular purposes, giving it new names and a new shape. The reconfiguration of the landscape not only parallels the action of imperial mapmakers, but also functions as a reversal of it—rather than spaces in the colonies being named after significant locations in the metropole, here it is the metropole upon which this new identity is imposed. Over the course of the five books set in the Lake District, the topography of the lake and its surrounding country is entirely altered. Nor are the people who live here safe from this imposition of new identity. Farmers and farms are turned into “natives” and “native settlements”, and the Blackett children's uncle Jim Turner is so successfully renamed Captain Flint that it is hard to remember that this is not his real name.

Further, as participants within this altered landscape, the children construct imperial identities for themselves—the Walker children, whose father is a naval captain, assume the roles of particular members of a ship’s crew, while the Blackett sisters reimagine themselves as pirates. Nancy Blackett even changes her name to this end—her real name is Ruth, but pirates must be Ruthless. Dick Callum adopts a series of scholarly identities, serving as a scientist or naturalist on a series of colonial expeditions.

The children’s overlaying of domestic territory with colonial imaginative spaces to their own ends is paralleled by Ransome’s authorial alteration of the landscape—which is made up of features taken from the surrounding landscape of two entirely different lakes, Coniston Water and Windermere:

The porosity which can be located in the children’s perception of the actual and the imaginative can be similarly traced in Ransome’s handling of the novel’s geographical setting [...] the distinction between material and fictional landscapes is collapsed as Ransome forges a new post-Romantic geography of the Lake District (Cooper and Priestnall 253).

The “real” landscape of the Lake District is thus altered and given a new set of figurative and literary associations by the children, and by the text. In the process, the reader is drawn into a similar relationship with the landscape, imaginatively altering it through their own engagement with the books.

At the same time, however, the books consistently interrogate the relationships between mapping, exploration, naming, and ownership. Victor Watson contends that “Every island, every river, every inlet and bay, is a discovery. Eden lies within this story. The children are like Adam and Eve naming the beasts and the flowers” (*Reading Series Fiction* 13). This assertion is puzzling, since it ignores not only the comparisons to imperial history which are explicitly made by the characters, but also the extent to which their own naming of the landscape is constantly challenged in the texts themselves.<sup>2</sup> In particular, this is made evident through the fact that, rather than bestowing names on unnamed objects and places,

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<sup>2</sup> It might be illuminating here to juxtapose Watson’s analogy with Mary Louise Pratt’s observation that the project of Carl Linnaeus is often compared to that of Adam in Paradise, and that such comparisons usually leave the connotation of primordial innocence unquestioned (Pratt 32).

they are working with existing maps, and territory that has already been fully charted. The following exchange, early in the first book, is illuminating in this regard:

John said, “What about a chart?”

Titty said that as the ocean had never been explored, there could not be any charts.

“But all the most exciting charts and maps have places on them that are marked ‘Unexplored’.”

“Well, they won’t be much good for those places,” said Titty.

“We ought to have a chart of some kind,” said John. “It’ll probably be all wrong, and it won’t have the right names. We’ll make our own names, of course.”

They found a good map that showed the lake in a local guide-book. Titty said it wasn’t really a chart. John said it would do. And Mrs Jackson said they could take it, but must keep it as dry as they could. (27)

As Siobhan Carroll has shown, the map with blank spaces is itself an imperial invention, dating from the eighteenth century. Carroll notes that the publication of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville’s map of Africa in 1749 marks a turning point in European cartography. In accordance with French Enlightenment philosophy, d’Anville’s map marked only the cartographical features which had been empirically verified by European explorers. In doing so, Carroll argues, the map also erased all traces of the groups and civilisations that did exist in the unmarked areas, replacing “visions of populated territory with a visual *terra nullius*, a ‘no person’s land’ invitingly open for colonial appropriation” (5).

Such an erasure of pre-existing civilisations is impossible in the imaginative map-making of *Swallows and Amazons*. Though the children annotate the guide-book map with their own associations, turning the stream that flows into the lake into the Amazon River, and the shore-side town into Rio, the mere fact that the original guide-book map exists palimpsestically underneath makes it impossible for them to treat the land as an empty or ahistorical space. The children may rename, map, and claim ownership of the spaces on the map, or declare the guide-book map “all wrong”, but they and the reader are aware that there are rival names and claimants to this territory. The Walkers will soon run into some of these



rivals for possession in the form of the Amazon girls, Peggy and Nancy Blackett, who live nearby and who, having camped on the island several times, may be said to have a prior claim. The two groups of children must then negotiate over the naming and possession of land; Wild Cat Island has already been named (and is acknowledged to be a better name than the proposed “Walker Island” in any case), but the Amazons are willing to accept the Walkers’ renaming of the river as “Rio”. The presence of rival claimants who hold the advantages of both a greater experience of the territory, and of having named things *first*, makes the creation of maps a crucial step in (and obstacle to) the attempt by the Walkers to demonstrate mastery over the space. As the text makes clear, they are undeniably trying to assert their rights over it: “‘There’s one thing we must do now,’ said John. ‘And that’s make our chart. The Amazons will be there tomorrow, and they’ve got their own names for everywhere. We must make our chart today. Who’s going to help?’” (250).

Yet, even the advantage of having charted or named things first may not always be enough; indeed, the children’s overwriting of the guide-book map ironically undermines the power of the map to define a territory, so that even as they rely on imperial constructions of space for their own adventures, they are destabilising the assumptions of power upon which those constructions depend. And the identity of a place too may not be constant—meaning and significance may be conditional, as the children realise when, at the end of the book, they debate changing the name of Cormorant Island:

“I say,” [Titty] turned suddenly to Captain John, remembering something important, “we can alter Cormorant Island to Treasure Island now, can’t we?”

“Well, you did find the treasure there,” said John.

“Oh, look here,” Peggy objected. “We call it Cormorant Island too. And treasure is only there sometimes, but cormorants are there always.”

“Cormorant Island is a very good name,” said Captain John. “How would it be if we were to leave it Cormorant Island and put a cross on it to show where the treasure was and mark it ‘Treasure found here’?”

Titty agreed.

“Let’s do it at once,” she said, and Captain John licked his fingers clean from the shark steak and went into his tent and came back with the chart. There and then “Treasure found here” was written in in small letters and a cross put on Cormorant Island to mark the place.

“Yes,” said Titty, “now we’ve found the treasure it isn’t exactly a treasure island. It’s an island where treasure was.” (456)

This is not the children’s only encounter with the idea that the “meaning” of a space may change over time. In *Swallowdale*, the second book in the series, the children adopt the roles of mountaineers in order to climb a tall hill that they have designated “Kanchenjunga” for the purposes of their game. At the top of the hill, they discover a note in a box which commemorates the achievement of another group of children (the Amazons’ own parents and uncle) who had successfully climbed “the Matterhorn” thirty years ago. The children are left to convince themselves that, since the mountain is now Kanchenjunga, they may still consider themselves the first to scale it (449). What emerges from both of these incidents is a sense of the map, and of the significance of spaces, as something temporary and conditional, produced in particular circumstances. In the first instance we see that an island can be a “Treasure Island” only as long as it contains hidden treasure; once this has gone, its entire meaning changes. By contrast, in the second instance, the same physical space can signify *both* the Matterhorn and Kanchenjunga, the two identities kept separate by the children’s agreement among themselves. Though the children often accept and embrace this understanding that the meaning of a space is constructed and malleable, at times they (and particularly Titty) are deeply frustrated by it. In *Swallowdale*, Titty discovers that the cave she has found and named after the invented character Peter Duck has already been claimed a generation previously by “Captain Flint” for his imaginary friend Ben Gunn.<sup>3</sup> Titty’s frustration, as she wonders, “had all the discoveries in the world been made already?” (213), is reminiscent of Conrad’s Marlow and his disappointment at seeing the blank spaces on the map filled. The books’ refusal to pander to the children’s fantasies of a *terra nullius* is

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<sup>3</sup> Ben Gunn is also named after a character in *Treasure Island*, providing a further link in the relationship of continuity that has the Walkers and the Blacketts reading the same narratives and inhabiting the same imperial imaginary as the generation before them.

accompanied by a treatment of the local landscape as a space with several layers of significance, as the next section will discuss.

## 2.2 Going Native

Victor Watson describes the genre of which the *Swallows and Amazons* books are the first prominent examples as “Camping and Tramping fiction”. He defines this genre as “a popular kind of British novel in which the narrative was mostly devoted to the excitements of hiking, exploring, boating, map-reading and the practicalities of camping” (*Cambridge* 124). Watson situates the genre in the decades between 1930 (the year in which *Swallows and Amazons* was published) and 1960 (the year of publication of Marjorie Lloyd’s *Fell Farm Campers*). Interest in the British countryside and in outdoor pursuits was at its peak during the interwar period in which the genre had its origins. As Martin J. Wiener notes, from the late nineteenth century onwards, the countryside had been given an increasing role in British literature, so that “a popular literary image of England took shape that gave a central place to the countryside” (50). In children’s fiction this impulse can be seen in such novels as Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906), as well as Richard Jefferies’s two *Bevis* books, *Wood Magic: A Fable* (1881), and *Bevis* (1882), featuring the same child character.<sup>4</sup> In the period during and immediately after the First World War in particular, the national discourse centred the image of the countryside. As Potts argues, “At times when the ‘outside’ world appeared particularly threatening, such images [of an idealised countryside] were often invoked to celebrate an English essence, enduring safe and beautiful, a home, and haven, and at the same time England’s glory” (Potts 162). A number of books published at this time locate an eternal Englishness in the countryside, among them H.V Morton’s *In Search of England* (1927), Thomas Burke’s *The Beauty of England* (1933), and J. B. Priestley’s *The Beauty of Britain* (1935). As Jed Esty has noted, this resurgence in interest in the English countryside was also taking place at a point of imperial decline, when, as he puts it, “the tropes and modes of colonial knowledge came home to roost” (7)—were, in other words, applied to the domestic landscape. Many of those engaged in the production of these descriptions of the British countryside were not from the country at all, nor were they necessarily landed gentry, who might feel a relation of ownership toward the land (Potts 164). This was also a time when the

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<sup>4</sup> *Bevis*, in particular, appears to be a forerunner to the *Swallows and Amazons* series—it is a novel in which two boys have a series of adventures in the countryside, by means of re-imagining their own situations to reflect those of the literature they have read.

increasing use of automobiles had “made the country more accessible to town-dwellers” (Wiener 45). The period also, as Bird notes, witnessed a “surge of interest in healthy outdoor leisure pursuits” (*National Identity* 28), fuelled in part by earlier fears about national decline in the wake of the Boer War. Over time, Potts claims, there emerged “a purely aestheticizing genre, geared to presenting the country and its inhabitants as enjoyable objects of urban experience” (165). What Potts suggests amounts to a kind of colonising of the countryside. That this countryside is described above as “English”, rather than “British”, is significant, though the two terms have often been conflated, in large part because of English dominance within the British Isles. Krishan Kumar traces the development of an “English” nationalism to the early twentieth century, linking it to nationalist and “folk” movements elsewhere in Europe, as well as to the fear of imperial decline after the Boer War. Kumar notes particularly the centrality of the “south country” to the image thus formed of the countryside, “to the point where it was endlessly reproduced as an image of ‘timeless’ England” (210). Though often used interchangeably, therefore, the terms “English” and “British” have very different connotations in the context of empire. Kumar suggests that “English” is “smaller and gentler”, while “British” connotes “a political identity which derives its legitimacy from the expansion of the nation state” (16). Similarly, Raphael Samuel describes “English” as a more “introverted” term than “British”, and adds that “Literature has normally been English; the Empire—it is argued—was always British” (48). The distinction that is being drawn here parallels the divide I have already drawn in my introduction between “domestic” and “imperial” identities and spaces. The renewed interest in the “English” landscape in this period thus constitutes an attempt to forge a national identity separate from the imperial British identity in the wake of imperial decline. Children’s literature was a key site for the forging of this identity, much as it had been for that of the imperial identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Writing in 1944, Paul Hazard claimed that England “could be reconstructed entirely from its children’s books” (*Books, Children and Men*, quoted in Trease, 4). Commenting on Hazard’s observation, Geoffrey Trease clarifies that the England thus invoked is not the “real thing”, but, “the subcutaneous pattern of its ideals and aspirations, its written traditions and its unspoken taboos” (139): in other words, a shared fiction.

In this context, it is illuminating to read camping and tramping novels as what Raphael Samuel terms “national fictions”. Victor Watson described the camping and

tramping genre as one made up of “love stories in which the loved one is the English countryside and the authorial desire is to initiate young readers into a similar devotion” (*Cambridge* 124). At a moment of imperial decline, then, these novels sought to relocate and re-present national identity as rooted in the landscape of England. An analysis of the overall narrative development evident across the five Lake District novels in Ransome’s series suggests a shift from an outward-facing imperial narrative towards a focus on the local landscape. While *Swallows and Amazons* and *Swallowdale* concern themselves with mapping and conquest, and *Winter Holiday* (1933) is the account of a race to the North Pole, *Pigeon Post* (1936) marks a turning inward towards the real terrain of the Lake District, while *The Picts and the Martyrs* (1943) continues this exploration of the local landscape and its history.

At the beginning of *Pigeon Post* we learn that Jim Turner, or Captain Flint, is prospecting for gold in South America. While the Walker, Blackett and Callum children are inspired by this to imagine themselves as prospectors as well, Nancy expresses resentment at her uncle’s absence, asking “Why shouldn’t he look for things here?” (22). Nancy’s aim is to demonstrate to her uncle the value of the local landscape, suggesting that when he sees the gold the children find, “he’ll never desert again” (23). Thus, rather than projecting the imperial space onto and over the domestic, as in the earlier books, *Pigeon Post* champions the domestic landscape. The children do not find gold, but their efforts are partially successful—they find a seam of copper in the area, while Jim’s prospecting trip abroad turns out to be a failure. In addition to proving the value of the domestic space, the seam of copper provides Jim with a reason to stay at home.

*The Picts and the Martyrs*, the penultimate book in the series (and the last to be set in the Lake District), also moves away from the formula of having the children act out imperial adventures in imagined colonial locales. Invited to stay at the Blackett home during the holidays, Dick and Dorothea Callum discover that the arrival of the Blacketts’ great aunt means that they must camp in the wood and hide all traces of their presence. They decide to play at being Picts, “who were living secretly in caves and only coming out at night long after other people had conquered the land” (86). Rather than being explorers and colonisers, then, they adopt the roles of a colonised indigenous people—they have gone “native“.

This choice is a significant one in the context of the earlier books. Like other camping-and-tramping books which used imperial motifs, the *Swallows and Amazons* books embody a rather paradoxical situation where questions of belonging are concerned. The genre presents its child characters discovering and exalting the English countryside, but because they do this through the use of an imperial framework of exploration and knowing, they approach the landscape from the perspective of outsiders. In effect, they are deriving a sense of identity from the landscape by first estranging themselves from it. In their adventures in the Lake District, as we have seen, Ransome's child characters position themselves as colonial explorers, whereas the (usually adult) inhabitants of the area are the "natives". In *Swallowdale*, they briefly consider playing at (or "being"; Ransome never distinguishes between the two) a "savage tribe" of native cave-dwellers, before deciding that adopting such a role would preclude their exploration of Kanchenjunga:

Titty summed up what everybody felt when she said, "So long as we're explorers, anything can happen. Think of last year. But if we're savages there wouldn't be any point even in climbing Kanchenjunga. We'd just have to sit on our bunkers and eat raw meat." (232)

Titty's comment suggests that exploration can only be done by an outsider (and that "savages" are inherently incurious about their surroundings). An unknown space, as Yi-fu Tuan suggests, "lies open; it suggests the future and invites action" (54). Once a space has been known and mapped, its imaginative possibilities are exhausted. It is telling that the action of the books never returns to Wild Cat Island after it has been thoroughly claimed by the children in the first book—while the reader is told that the children still visit the island, for the narrative itself it ceases to be a site for adventure. Titty's concern in *Swallowdale* that everything may have been discovered already is therefore understandable—if this is the case, there can be no more adventures.

It is significant, therefore, that the Walker and Callum children are presented to us as strangers to the Lake District, visiting it only as a holiday destination. Nancy and Peggy Blackett, though they go away to boarding school during the term time, have grown up in the area and must therefore be considered local, even though they are separated from those whom they refer to as "natives" by class. Their relationship to other locals is at times distinctly feudal, as evinced by Nancy's dismissal of a policeman who has the temerity to question the

Swallows in the first book, and her willingness to order a local postman about in *The Picts and the Martyrs*. It is also revealing that none of the books is written from the perspective of the Amazons—the reader, therefore, is always in the position of outsider to this landscape and its possibilities. This relegation of the text, along with the reader, to the position of outsider implies that the text to some extent shares Titty’s belief that local knowledge of a space exhausts its narrative possibilities.

The willingness of the Callum children to become “native” Picts in *The Picts and the Martyrs* thus marks a significant shift in the children’s relationship with the landscape—rather than surveying it from above as colonial outsiders, they display a willingness to embed themselves within it and to gain a deeper understanding of its past. It is worth noting that they imagine the Picts as living in caves, literally within the land; much like the cave-dwelling “savages” whose opportunities for adventure had been dismissed by Titty in *Swallowdale*. This shift is signalled in *Pigeon Post*, also a book whose characters spend a significant quantity of time in old mines, and thus embedded in the ground.<sup>5</sup> In *Pigeon Post*, the children camp near the home of Mrs Tyson, who believes that the children may be irresponsible enough to start a fire on the dry fells (a real danger in the middle of a drought). This is one of the few instances within the books where the children’s right to the land is questioned. At the end of the book, however, the children have proved themselves responsible members of the community by joining Mrs Tyson and other “natives” in putting out a fire. Moreover, Titty discovers a talent for dowsing and in embracing it not only finds an important water source, but situates herself within a local tradition—Nancy informs the others that there had previously been a dowser in the village who had found water for the Blacketts’ own home (145). As Lucy Pearson notes, *Pigeon Post* “breaks down the boundaries between child and adult [...] and between locals and visitors” (“Prizing”). Similarly, the Callum children learn from the “natives” around them to become part of a larger tradition; learning traditional ways of trout farming from Jacky, and working with Timothy Stedding in *The Picts and the Martyrs* (and earlier through Dick’s quiet friendship with Mr Dixon in *Winter Holiday*). Both the Callums and the Blacketts enter into a series of alliances with local adults in order to

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter Six will discuss in more detail this shift in landscape fantasy towards narratives embedded within the earth.

thwart Great Aunt Maria. The children have thus accepted a desire to fit into the local community.

Community is innately linked to local history here, and England's past was a major concern of camping and tramping fiction. As I mention above, many writers of this period located an innate "Englishness" in the countryside. Inspired by such books as Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, in camping-and-tramping fiction, as in much contemporaneous children's literature, "a specifically English community was implicitly celebrated, stretching from Bronze Age settlers to the defeat of Germany" (Watson, *Cambridge* 124–125). The space of the countryside was thus presented as a link between past and present—the camping-and-tramping novel constructed a shared sense of English history and the child protagonist's place in it. Michel Foucault suggests that heterotopias may provide a link to what he calls "heterochronies", or other times. In the camping-and-tramping novel, as in the later landscape fantasies that will be discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis, the constructed "other" space of rural England becomes one "of indefinitely accumulating time [...] a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" (26). To a great extent, the *Swallows and Amazons* books use the landscape of the Lake District as a space which represents a larger communal past. The children's earlier disappointment at not being the first inhabitants of this landscape is replaced by a growing interest in the history of those who came before them. In *Swallowdale*, Roger Walker twists his ankle and has to spend the night in the tents of the charcoal burners. He is moved by the sense of the past in the stories of one elderly man, even though he doesn't fully understand them. We are told that

Roger did not say that he did not understand. He just listened and the words went over his head like great poetry, only leaving him the feeling that the old man who was talking was very much stirred up by something or other that had happened a very long time ago. (502)

This sense of history is linked to family as well as to a wider community. Absent parents are a common feature in children's literature, and because the *Swallows and Amazons* books focus on the adventures of children whose parents grant them a great deal of independence, critics have often read them as merely another example of this trend. John Rowe Townsend, for example, relegates the parents in the series to "understanding figures in the background" (185), and Geoffrey Trease describes the characters as "almost independent of adult



interference” (139), while Nicholas Tucker places the books in a tradition of “fictional parents [who] tend to get by worry-free without their children because they seem to have little or no emotional attachment to them” and thus free the child to have adventures without worrying about their effects on the family (190). What these perspectives ignore, however, is the extent to which the children’s games gradually bring them into a relationship of continuity with their parents.

This is perhaps most evident in an episode in *Swallowdale* described earlier, in which the children climb “Kanchenjunga” only to find a note at the top claiming that the summit of the “Matterhorn” has been previously achieved:

“August the 2nd. 1901.

We climbed the Matterhorn.

Molly Turner.

J. Turner.

Bob Blackett.”

“That’s mother and Uncle Jim,” said Peggy in a queer voice.

“Who is Bob Blackett?” asked Susan.

“He was father,” said Nancy. (449)

While the children are briefly disappointed, the episode places their own game of discovery in a tradition that survives across generations, as each new set of Blackett or Turner (or Walker, or Callum) children explores this landscape. Earlier in the chapter, the children contemplate circumnavigating the world, deciding that they will someday, since “Daddy” (Captain Walker) and “Uncle Jim” have done it. In *Swallows and Amazons*, Titty is visited on the island by Mrs Walker, “the best of natives”, and mother and daughter share each other’s stories of adventure. While Captain Walker is absent from most books in the series, he is integral to their plot; it is he, for example, who sets off the events of *Swallows and Amazons* by sending the children permission (his famous telegram reading “BETTER DROWNED THAN DUFFERS IF DUFFERS WONT DROWN”) to sail to the island, and he who assigns the children the task of producing an accurate map of an unknown territory in *Secret Water*. He looms large in John’s consciousness and is frequently invoked while John is sailing, in large part because John also hopes for a career in the navy. The practical skills developed by

the children through their play, then, contribute to John's training for a future role in emulation of his father's.

This raises the question of the extent to which the children's play is also a form of socialisation. Farah Mendlesohn notes that narrative games of the sort employed in the *Swallows and Amazons* books are a common practice within children's literature, and that these stories "envisage a model of play that understands the primary and overwhelming purpose of play as the emulation or negotiation of future adult roles and adult relationships to the world" ("Childish Things" 34). Mendlesohn believes these relationships in Ransome's case to be "conformist", and to some extent this is true, particularly in the case of Susan. As the "first mate" of the Swallow, Susan is also a competent sailor, but her duties aboard the ship and within the group all point to a future domestic role. Susan organises the camps and sees to the meals and occasionally (for example when Titty is scared of her own attempts at magic in *Swallowdale*) acts as a surrogate mother figure. At the end of the first book, as the girls fantasise about leaving school and living on the island forever, John alludes to his future career. "I shall be going to sea some day," said John, "and so will Roger. But we'll always come back here on leave" (345). John's holiday activities prepare him to follow in his father's footsteps, maintaining what is, even in the early 1930s, still a strong British Empire, and Roger too is expected to join the navy. Dick Callum may become an academic. No careers are projected for any of the girl characters, though Titty and Dorothea both plan to write. The gendered nature of these prospective careers invites a conservative reading of the series.

Megan A. Norcia has suggested that children's games often worked in the service of empire. The links between imperialism and organised school sports in particular have often been made but Norcia suggests that even the less formal "parlour games" had a role to play.<sup>6</sup> "Seemingly innocuous party games, parlor theatricals, and improvisational play reinforced the agenda of nineteenth-century British imperialism and played a formative role in shaping the imperial consciousness of young people" ("Playing" 294). The "desired pattern of adulthood" (Mendlesohn, "Childish Things" 34) negotiated by the children here is thus an

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed study on school sports and empire, see J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Routledge, 2000).

imperial one as well. In *Missee Lee* the children explain to the eponymous Miss Lee that John Walker's weakness at Latin is irrelevant, since he is destined for a career in the navy, where this subject would be of less worth to him than mathematics (253). Further, Captain Walker's presence or absence in the books often creates a direct link between family holidays and state policy. *Secret Water*, for example, opens with the line "the First Lord of the Admiralty was unpopular at Pin Mill"; family plans having had to be altered because of orders from Captain Walker's superiors.

However, a reading of the series which suggests that the children are encouraged to step directly into the imperial roles of the previous generation would be a superficial one. Such a framework would have difficulty in accommodating such a character as Nancy Blackett, whose former life as a pirate is in no way suitable training for any conventional adult role. More importantly, however, the series as a whole constitutes an acknowledgement that the adult roles it imagines may no longer exist. To expand upon this point, it is necessary here to discuss the three "fantasies" in the series, and the wider question of genre.

### **2.3 Realistic Fantasy/Fantastical Reality?**

Readers of the series have faced some difficulty in categorising three of the *Swallows and Amazons* books in particular; *Peter Duck* (1932), *Missee Lee* (1941), and *Great Northern?* (1947). Critical work in praise of Ransome's oeuvre has tended to focus on the realistic aspects of his books. Yet these three books sit in a particularly complex relationship to the rest of the series, so that I address them separately here. Peter Hunt classifies them as "fantasy", but is forced to qualify that statement in light of Geoffrey Trease's claim that *all* of the books in the series are set in a fantasy world, albeit one "disguised under a wealth of realistic detail" (Hunt, *Ransome* 147). Trease's definition is too broad for Hunt, while a definition of the fantastic which requires the overt presence of magic or supernatural forces is too narrow. A more nuanced reading of the situation is that proposed by Sarah Spooner, who feels that Hunt's grouping together of these three books as fantasies ignores the extent to which, even in the other nine novels, the very ideas of the fantastic and the real "are produced in a constant and never-ending process of negotiation, producing one place in relation to

another, offering multiple ways of reading landscape and ‘home’” (206). Even in the Lake District novels discussed above, as I have been arguing, the domestic games of the children are created by a constant movement between the familiar and the exotic, to the extent that the familiar world can be reimagined as strange, so that charcoal burners’ tents can be turned into “wigwams”, toffee and lemonade into “molasses” and “grog”. Spooner further suggests that defining these books as fantasies “seems to function as a label with which to contain –and sideline—events or behaviours that do not contribute to a tidy or coherent reading of the series as a whole” (208), and Hunt’s claim that “to read the characters [in these three books] as having any more than a nominal relationship with those who develop through the other nine books is to court disappointment” (147) achieves precisely the sort of “sidelining” that Spooner warns against.

Nevertheless, the very fact that critics have so frequently set these books apart from the rest of the series, and seem so perplexed by them, suggests some substantial generic divergence from the “main” sequence of the books. (I am following Hunt’s terminology in referring to the nine books set in England as the “main” sequence; though this has the unfortunate connotation of relegating the three “fantasies” to the margin, it is necessary to use separate terms for the two sets of books.) Here, too, critics seem to struggle to locate the point of divergence. Christina Hardyment suggests that one difference lies in the level of danger faced by the children. While, in the other books in the series, the characters are sometimes at risk of accidents, here, “the children are actually shot at with real guns. [*Peter Duck*, *Missee Lee*, and *Great Northern?*] are pure romance, realistic fantasy rather than fantastical reality” (26). Hardyment’s distinction is not entirely convincing. The children are in at least as much danger in *We Didn’t Mean to Go to Sea* (1937), which Hardyment is willing to classify alongside the rest of the series, while the books she describes as “fantastical reality” are so diverse in their presentations of that reality that it is not clear what purpose the categorisation serves. In a series consisting of books so varied in their respective relationships to reality, a “tidy or coherent” reading may not be possible or even particularly desirable. Despite this, I’d like to suggest a reading in which the two sets of books are *not*, as Hunt claims, “using the same nominal characters for two very different purposes” (147), but are instead working in parallel to address many of the same concerns. As I explain above, the relationship between the text and the space it purports to depict is given form by the map, and it is through an analysis of the maps in these three books that I will demonstrate their role in constructing

imperial narratives as wholly fantastic. In order to do this, however, a brief discussion of each of these three books is necessary.

The reader who has read the series in order of publication will already be aware, upon opening *Peter Duck*, that the eponymous character is (within the fictional reality of the books) not real. In *Swallowdale* we are told that Duck was merely part of a story created by the children:

He had been the most important character in the story they had made up during those winter evenings in the cabin of the wherry with Nancy and Peggy and Captain Flint. Peter Duck, who said he had been afloat ever since he was a duckling, was the old sailor who had voyaged with them to the Caribbees in the story and, still in the story, had come back to Lowestoft with his pockets full of pirate gold. Titty had had a big share in his invention, and now she made him useful in all sorts of ways, sometimes when she and Roger were together, but mostly when she was by herself. (66–67)

*Swallowdale* thus summarises the events of the story which, extended, forms *Peter Duck*. This is not, however, the first time in the series that this story has been told. A central incident in *Swallows and Amazons* involves the theft of Jim Turner's trunk, which is rumoured to be full of treasure. The trunk is subsequently found on "Cormorant Island" by Titty Walker. In *Peter Duck*, a shipwrecked sailor (*Robinson Crusoe* is another of the book's source texts) sees two men burying treasure at the foot of a tree on an island, and after their subsequent deaths at sea, is the only one who knows its location. He is hired by Captain Flint to join the crew (consisting of the Swallows and Amazons) of the ship *The Wild Cat*, and they sail to the island, pursued by the evil Black Jake who wants the treasure for himself. Read alone, this is merely a rather derivative adventure, but to the reader of *Swallows and Amazons*, it is possible to read the events of *Peter Duck* as a direct retelling (in the form of an adventure novel) of the treasure episode from the first book: Titty, who has been playing the part of a shipwrecked sailor earlier during the day, is transformed into Peter Duck; like him she inadvertently witnesses the thieves hiding the treasure and leads a party back later to hunt for it, eventually finding it at the foot of a tree.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In *Swallowdale* it is clear that Peter Duck is a stronger presence in Titty's imagination than those of the other children—she often reminds them of his presence.

Much of the humour in the episode as it appears in *Swallows and Amazons* lies in the contrast between the romantic notions of the children (and of local gossip, which suggests that “Captain Flint” has filled his houseboat with treasures) and the reality that the trunk contains only a typewriter and the manuscript of his book. Taken alongside this treasure episode in *Swallows and Amazons* and the information given to the reader in *Swallowdale*, the implicit suggestion is that even within the imaginative world of the text, stories like *Peter Duck* can only ever be fictional.<sup>8</sup>

However, not all readers of *Peter Duck* can be assumed to be readers of *Swallows and Amazons* or *Swallowdale*. As Peter Hunt has noted, it was with the publication of this third book that the series itself became successful. Many readers of *Peter Duck* would therefore be approaching the series for the first time with no knowledge of the characters and setting. This makes the categorisation of the book somewhat complicated—whether one approaches *Peter Duck* as a realistic or fantastical text is dependent on the context in which it is received. What is, within the context of the series, a metafictional text which pastiches adventure narratives may in fact have achieved popularity precisely because it gave the impression of being a traditional adventure story.

*Peter Duck* is in direct imitation of the literature of empire and so adopts that tradition’s assumptions of the world as open to and claimable by British children. This is not the case with *Missee Lee*, the other novel in the series to venture outside Europe. *Missee Lee* is usually assumed to be a fantasy because it uses the ship described in *Peter Duck*, the *Wild Cat*; because it is set in Asia; and because it is improbable that a group of school children would spend a year crewing a ship around the world with only one adult. Towards the end of this voyage, the characters are shipwrecked near the Chinese coast. They are captured by the eponymous Miss Lee, a “twenty-two gong Taicoon,” and find themselves in a community of

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<sup>8</sup> Christina Hardyment quotes extensively from “Their Own Story”, an earlier draft of *Peter Duck* which includes references to a book titled *Swallows and Amazons*; the children speculate over whether or not Jim Turner is the author and complain about the many things that the book gets wrong. This draft also contains what seems to be a frame narrative for *Peter Duck*, in which the children decide to write a story of their own, and to “put in lots of other people, you know, for walking the plank or being drowned, or eaten by sharks or anything like that” (Hardyment 151). The frame narrative more definitely positions the work as metafictional, though the final version of the text renders such a framing narrative unnecessary.

pirates whose lives and livelihood will be threatened should the British discover the location of the islands.

In form this could be any typical adventure novel, but *Missee Lee* complicates the relationship between its British characters and their imperial others in various ways. Miss Lee herself has attended a traditional British boarding school and spent time at Cambridge—she is a classical scholar, former hockey player, and her private rooms are furnished so that to enter them “is like walking into Europe out of Asia” (192). The figure of the aristocratic Asian or African who aspires, and usually fails, to appear English is not a new one in British children’s literature (Hurree Jamset Ram, of Frank Richards’ *Billy Bunter* stories, and Hurree Babu in Kipling’s *Kim* are among the best-known examples), and Miss Lee is in part a comic figure in the tradition of such characters. Ransome’s attempts to produce the speech and accents of his Chinese characters are particularly unfortunate. However, the text also accords her genuine respect. Captain Flint acknowledges that “She’s a sailor alright, our Miss Lee” (290), and it is she, rather than the children or Captain Flint, who becomes the heroic defender of tradition. The Chinese people as a whole are credited with a long history of navigation (“And then she told them about the south-pointing compass invented by the Chinese, and of how, in the past, Chinese junks had made long voyages” [293]) and the English characters are led into danger by Captain Flint’s misjudging the cosmopolitanism of the Chinese sailors. Even as the novel plays in to several of the tropes of imperial adventure fiction, then, it disrupts others.

The children’s attitude to the spaces through which they are travelling is also drastically different from that presented in *Peter Duck*. Late in the book, at the end of a journey, Roger refers to the approaching land as “ours” and immediately corrects himself: “‘There’s our island . . . I mean Miss Lee’s,’ Roger was saying a moment later” (296). In *Missee Lee*, the instinct to claim territory seen in the earlier books is suppressed. In contrast to the Lake District books, where “native” ownership of the land is seen as an obstacle to the children’s games, here it is treated with respect. At the same time, the other taicoons’ refusal to allow British people on their islands is shown to have sound reasoning behind it—the children understand that they pose a genuine danger to the pirates, so it is entirely justified that they should be unwelcome in this space. The processes of empire, as well as the

children's own participation in it, are presented here as a destructive, rather than glorious, force.

Of the three "fantasies" it is *Great Northern?* which has the most tenuous claim to the genre. On a sailing holiday around the islands and coast of Scotland, Dick Callum discovers a nesting pair of Great Northern Divers. In trying to confirm his discovery (the birds have not previously been known to nest in the British Isles) he reveals the secret to an egg-collector, who subsequently poses a threat to the birds. In comparison to *Peter Duck* and *Missee Lee*, the events of *Great Northern?* fit plausibly within the main narrative. In fact, John Rowe Townsend does not appear to think of this book as fantasy at all (184–185). Hunt's categorisation of it as such seems to stem from a sense that it is not in continuity with the other books, and that the characters do not display the increasing maturity of what he considers "the main sequence of [the] books" (149). The difficulty of categorising *Great Northern?*, in fact, exposes the inadequacy of the fantasy/reality divide thrust upon these books by critics.

My own argument for reading these three works together is formed by a reading of the ways in which each of them employs the device of the map. As has been mentioned above, all of the books in the series contain maps, and are usually printed with them as endpapers. This convention also holds true of the "fantasies", but since, within the fictional world of the books, these places may not exist, it becomes necessary to conceal information as well as to reveal it. While all of the maps in the series of necessity (since the places they depict are not real) provide the reader with incomplete information, in the case of *Peter Duck*, *Missee Lee*, and *Great Northern?*, the denial of this information is central to the books themselves. In each of these novels the necessity of hiding the locations of these spaces is easily explained within the plot. The "Chart of the Atlantic Ocean Showing the Track of The Wild Cat from Lowestoft to Crab Island and Back" which opens *Peter Duck* only tells us that Crab Island is located somewhere in or near the Caribbean Sea. This lack of specificity is unsurprising, since its latitude and longitude are known only to the title character, who has good reason not to share this information, and whose life is at risk because he possesses it. At the end of the book, Crab Island need no longer be kept secret but, much like the "Treasure Island" of *Swallows and Amazons*, it has become "an island where treasure *was*" (456), and



its location no longer matters. The map that accompanies *Missee Lee* is somewhat different: here too the information provided is limited, yet the map itself draws our attention to this. Within the novel, the danger posed by the arrival of the children and Captain Flint lies in the fact that they have a sextant and so are capable of working out the geographic coordinates of the Three Islands. The book opens with a map, ostensibly drawn by Nancy, with a note that explains that this information has therefore been replaced with drawings of boats. The note reads,

MISS LEE'S ISLANDS.

Based on the map we found and on what we saw. Some of it we had to guess at. We never had a chance to do a proper survey.

NOTE. We are not putting in the lat. and long. because if the government knew it might send gunboats and people to shoot Miss Lee or even put her in prison because of what she is doing. This would be very unfair as she is only doing it because of her duty to her ancestors.

—Nancy Blackett (Capt)

We have put in junks instead.

Rather than learning, through their play, to be good imperial citizens, the children here are deliberately thwarting the British Empire and colluding with unlawful natives. It is fitting that Nancy, herself a pirate, is the one to openly declare her allegiance to Miss Lee rather than to her own government.

In *Great Northern?*, the concealment of location once again becomes a central plot point. Having seen what he believes to be a Great Northern Diver in an unnamed location in the Hebrides, Dick Callum visits an expert on birds in order to verify his discovery. Unfortunately, the “bird-man” turns out to be an egg-collector, and Dick realises that, in confiding in him, he has placed the birds in danger. The remainder of the book is therefore taken up with the children’s attempts to protect the birds from the danger in which they have placed them.

Crucially, Ransome makes it clear that Dick is aware of the man’s true profession *before* he shares what he knows, making him culpable in what follows:

Dick hesitated only for a moment. He was a scientist after all. He had to know. It was horrible to think that the owner of the *Pterodactyl* was an egg-collector, but the very pictures round the walls of the saloon told Dick that no one would be better able to settle his doubts about those birds. For twenty-four hours he had been waiting to ask his question. (117)

As I mention above, Dick represents a version of imperial power which is realised through the production of scientific knowledge. It is his thirst for such knowledge that leads him to risk the safety of the birds, a decision he later regrets, so that this book contains an implicit critique of scientific conquests as well as literal ones. There are two maps in *Great Northern?*, the first of these a wider view of Scotland with places visited by the *Sea Bear* marked with crosses. The second map, ostensibly a view of the island where the Divers are found, provides little physical detail. The text of the story is preceded by a note explaining, as in the case of *Missee Lee*, these omissions both in map and in text:

Every effort has been made (short of falsifying the course of events) to prevent the inquisitive reader from learning the exact place where the *Sea Bear* was scrubbed and the Ship's Naturalist made his discovery. Persons who pester the author for more information (whether or not they enclose stamped envelopes with their letters) will not be answered. Further, should anyone with particular knowledge of the Hebrides identify the loch where the Divers are nesting and be the means of disturbing them, they will make enemies of John, Susan, Titty, Roger, Nancy, Peggy, Dorothea and Dick, as well as of the author, who will in that case be very sorry he has written this account of what happened. (9)

A series whose earlier books took the acts of mapping and discovery as their central concerns thus ends with a map that tells us nothing, and a note asking the reader not to try to find out. The maps in *Missee Lee* and *Great Northern?* are not, like the treasure maps discussed in the next chapter, a device to render the landscape tantalising and encourage the reader to "solve" it. They are designed to be illegible, and openly discourage the reader from making the attempt. All three of the "fantasies" in the series demonstrate an increasing discomfort with the ideas of mapping, knowledge, and mapping-as-knowledge. The power over space that is represented by the map and the kind of totalising knowledge that is implied by Captain Flint's sextant and even by Dick's ornithology are revealed to have serious consequences in the real world. Though these texts, positioned as metafictional within the series, are therefore

a step further removed from reality than the “main” sequence, both *Missee Lee* and *Great Northern?* present the spaces they describe as existing in the real world and therefore able to be affected by the knowledge that is produced about them through the novel and its map. In both books, significantly, it is the children themselves who are positioned as the source of possible harm to the space and those who inhabit it. In this vein it may be added that another way in which these books differ from the “main” sequence is in the amount of agency they provide their child characters with—but unlike the imperial adventure narratives invoked throughout the series, the ability to exert power upon the mapped space is presented as deeply disturbing.

This increasing distrust towards imperial protocols of knowledge and their consequences is thus accompanied by a sense of the increasing impossibility of the adventure novel. As I have already shown, the humour inherent in the “treasure” episode in *Swallows and Amazons* relies on the reader’s understanding that a wide gulf exists between the kinds of stories that are found in books like *Peter Duck*, and those available to the characters of *Swallows and Amazons*. As Jameson has shown, genres are “essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public” (92); the terms under which “reality” operates within the series, as it is set up in the earlier books, relegate these more traditional adventure narratives to the realm of the impossible.

It is necessary here to further unpack the relationship between the fantastic and realist elements within the texts. More than most novels published as fantasy, the *Swallows and Amazons* books fulfil the conditions set by Tzvetan Todorov in his definition of the fantastic as a mode.<sup>9</sup> He describes a fantastic text as one in which an event occurs which “cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world” (25), and which must therefore either be the product of an illusion, or must suggest that the laws by which this reality is governed are as yet unknown. For Todorov, the fantastic exists in the moment of *hesitation* during which both of these possibilities are still open; once one or the other is chosen, “we leave the fantastic for a neighbouring genre, the uncanny or the marvellous” (25). The opening pages

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<sup>9</sup> Todorov’s definition of “the fantastic” constitutes something of a confusion in terms when applied to works actually published as “fantasy”, as it is applicable only to a limited number of works within the popular genre. (See for example Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* xxiii; Wolfe 73.)

of *Swallows and Amazons* offer a useful example of this moment of hesitation; Roger runs up the slope towards his mother, but in zigzags. “He could not run straight against the wind because he was a sailing vessel, a tea-clipper, the Cutty Sark” (13). Roger *is* a sailing vessel; the narrative endorses the children’s play by never framing it as pretence, and the reader is left to deduce for herself what is and is not possible in this world. As Jerry Phillips and Ian Wojcik-Andrews note, the narrator frequently adopts the names chosen by the children themselves; referring to Roger as “the Ship’s Boy”, Susan as “the mate”, and in one particular scene, to Titty and Mrs Walker as “Robinson Crusoe” and “Man Friday”—even when the two characters are acting like mother and daughter (“Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday then kissed each other as if they were pretending to be Titty and Mother.” [189]). In doing so, the texts lend weight to the “reality” of the children’s play and, further, at times suggests that this reality is universal and shared by all children. When, for example, Nancy Blackett asks Dick and Dorothea Callum “but what are you? In real life, I mean” (*Winter Holiday*, 39) they know exactly what she means.

Gary K. Wolfe notes that most attempts to define fantasy seem to agree that the genre “must first and foremost deal with the impossible” (68). Such a definition, however, raises questions over where the limits of the possible lie. Literary context plays a major role in determining not only whether a given event is possible, but to what extent “a particular impossible event or being signals an individual aesthetic structure rather than a private psychosis or a culturally accepted myth” (Wolfe 69). In the case of the *Swallows and Amazons* series, none of the events described in the plots of the individual books is truly impossible—it is *unlikely* that schoolchildren would have the adventures described in *Peter Duck* or *Missee Lee*, but in and of themselves these books are no more impossible than any of several adventure novels or romances—the books are, for example, contemporaneous with several of Enid Blyton’s adventure series, while the children themselves are of a similar age to those in R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858). What relegates these events in Ransome’s books to the realm of the impossible is the context created by the other books in the series—the “contract” referred to by Jameson.

Even once the terms of this contract have largely been deciphered, the reader of the *Swallows and Amazons* books may experience several examples of the hesitation that

Todorov describes. Witness, for example, the continuing critical bewilderment over the status of *Great Northern?* within the series, even as critical consensus over what is and is not “real” has largely been arrived at in the case of the other books. Farah Mendlesohn’s claim that children’s books that employ these narrative games “are very clear about what is and what isn’t reality” (“Childish Things” 34) neglects to account for the several layers of narrative play that are at work both within the books and in the ways they function as a series. Nonetheless, she is correct in asserting that, through the process of this play, “the games are exposed as ‘story-telling’ and hence ground the characters within the emulatory position of the child”. However much the children’s play may be endorsed at the level of the narrative, there does remain a fundamental difference between “playing” and “being”. Whereas Mendlesohn sees this difference as one of age and agency (the children emulate adult roles because they cannot yet “be” adults), the series as a whole invites a more complex reading. By making the imperial project the subject of narrative games and temporary, mutually agreed-upon rules, as well as by contrasting imperial narratives with the more mundane experiences of the children, the “main” series relegates this imperial project to the realm of play. The creation of a set of metafictional adventures within the series further marks out these adventures as impossible; plausible only if presented at a remove from reality.

As I have been arguing, location becomes an important marker of possibility within these texts. Christina Hardyment’s categorisation of *Peter Duck*, *Missee Lee*, and *Great Northern?* as fantastical is part of a larger project in which she attempts to trace the “real” spaces that inspired these locations. Hardyment’s choice not to include these three texts in this analysis then suggests that their foreign locales are in and of themselves “non-real”. Nor is Hardyment the only critic to take this position. Citing Victor Watson’s claim that the opening scenes of *Missee Lee*, set in Japan, mark the text as fantastic, Sarah Spooner observes, wryly, that “[the] implication is that there is something intrinsically non-real about Japan or China that makes any novel set there into a non-real, a fantasy text” (208). I would suggest that this production of spaces outside Britain as unreal is inherent to the series itself, rather than an outcome of Watson or Hardyment’s critical stances. Much as the imaginative referents for the children’s games in the more “realist” novels begin as traditional imperial narratives before rooting themselves in local community and history, the fantasy novels move from a focus on the far-flung and exotic space (islands off the coast of South America, pirates in China) to the more local, with the last of them, *Great Northern?*, set in the British Isles.

Read from this perspective, the series as a whole becomes an extended meditation on narrative possibility after empire. Increasingly, the books suggest that the imperial narratives that were open to the Walker and Blackett parents exist only as fictions for their children—John and Roger may join the navy, but it will not be the globally dominant force of which Captain Walker was a part. Whereas the earlier books in the series treat imperial space as at least an imaginative possibility (the children can still play at sailing to Rio or climbing Kanchenjunga), the turn of the final books towards the British Isles suggests that even that may no longer be possible. Other narratives, and other imagined spaces, must be found.

Brian Attebery has proposed a reading of genre fiction, and of fantasy in particular, as “fuzzy sets”, “defined not by boundaries but by a center” (12), where the centre is a text that is agreed to be the “core” of the genre. Drawing on Attebery, Farah Mendlesohn suggests that the genre of fantasy is in fact composed of a *series* of fuzzy sets linked together by “taproot texts” (*Rhetorics* xvii). Such an approach is particularly useful for a series such as this one, in which meaning is created in large part by the interaction between the texts. Rather than drawing a stark boundary between realist and fantastical works, conceiving of genre in terms of the “fuzzy set” allows us to situate the work within a network of texts with which it shares particular affinities. As I have shown, the Swallows and Amazons series is easily read in the context of early landscape fantasies like Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* and Richard Jefferies’ *Wood Magic*. More importantly, it bears a strong affinity to later British children’s fantasies, including C. S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* (surely the taproot text for British children’s fantasy in the twentieth century), both in popularising the family adventure novel—the distribution of genders and personality traits among Lewis’s Pevensies in particular seem directly inspired by Ransome<sup>10</sup>—and in explicitly transferring the imperial landscape to a fantastic one. Ransome’s series interrogates the possibilities of imperial and domestic spaces at the end of empire, and, as the following chapters will show, in doing so is a precursor to much of the twentieth century British children’s fantasy that follows.

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<sup>10</sup> C. Butler describes the convention in British fantasies of the 1950s and 1960s “that mysteries that have eluded the locals for centuries will yield their secrets to visiting middle-class children (usually from London) within a couple of days of arrival” (*Four British Fantasists* 111), a trope which seems a direct descendant of the camping and tramping genre.

### Chapter 3. Imperial Adventure and English Myth: J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

In a 1939 lecture, later published in essay form under the title “On Fairy Stories”, J.R.R. Tolkien defines the “fairy story” as one concerned with “the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches” (*Tree* 14). The lecture is significant as an early attempt to analyse fantasy literature, and it is notable that his definition should rely so heavily on the *space* occupied by the fantastic narrative. Arguing that the first recorded use of the word “Faërie” treats it as a space (rather than a creature), he uses the term “fairy story” to refer, not to diminutive winged creatures, but to narratives set in this alternate space (13–14).<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on Faërie as a separate space is reiterated at several points throughout the lecture—later in the piece he defines Fantasy as “the making or glimpsing of Other-worlds” (40), again laying emphasis on a space of alterity as a fundamental aspect of the genre. This space of alterity is a type of the “external space” described by Foucault, and discussed in greater detail in Chapter One (Foucault 23).

In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed Brian Attebery’s formulation of “fuzzy sets”, according to which genres are defined not by their boundaries but by their core texts. For Attebery, modern fantasy is defined in relation to Tolkien. He states: “Tolkien’s form of fantasy, for readers in English, is our mental template, and will be until someone else achieves equal recognition with an alternative conception. One way to characterize the genre of fantasy is the set of texts that in some way or other resemble *The Lord of the Rings*” (14). If heterotopic space is fundamental to Tolkien’s construction of the genre, then, the implication is that space is central to the genre as a whole.

Tolkien’s children’s fantasy novel, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (1937), had been published two years before the presentation of “On Fairy Stories”. Set in the world of Middle-earth, it was the first of several works by the author to be set in this secondary fantasy space and, as I will argue, it exemplifies the centrality of “other” spaces to the genre—a fact which can be most clearly seen in the book’s use of its two maps. In this chapter I will consider in detail the heterotopic and heterochronic functions of Middle-earth as it appears in

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<sup>1</sup> Tolkien writes, “for fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories *about* fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being” (*Tree* 14). All of Tolkien’s Middle-earth stories are by this definition included in Faërie.

this text.<sup>2</sup> Dividing the chapter into the “There” and “Back Again” of the book’s alternate title, I will begin with an examination of Middle-earth as “imperial” space; that is, a space which exists in relation to the narrativisation of colonised (and colonisable) territories in the imperial imagination. In the second part of the chapter, I will discuss the construction of particular spaces within Middle-earth as “English”. Here I will demonstrate that Middle-earth’s peculiar relation to temporality is a consequence of Tolkien’s desire to create “a mythology for England”, and will examine the nature of the England produced by the text.

Discussing a single work within a series entirely in isolation is impossible, and though Tolkien’s other works (as most of them were not published as children’s books) are outside the remit of this chapter, it will occasionally be necessary to refer to the wider “legendarium” (Tolkien’s own word for his Middle-earth writings). Unlike *The Lord of the Rings*, which set the pattern for much of the fantasy to follow, *The Hobbit* sits rather uncomfortably in Tolkien’s oeuvre. As Dimitra Fimi has noted, it was originally an independent story for Tolkien’s children, and was drawn by degrees into the wider legendarium (Fimi, *Tolkien* 118–119). Many parts of the book were, as discussed above, rewritten to bring it in line with the larger mythology, yet inconsistencies of tone, geography, and naming remain. It is unclear to what extent Tolkien had originally intended *The Hobbit* to fit into his Middle-earth setting, and it is possible that he was at the time still unsure as to the relationship between Middle-earth and our own world. Despite its vexed relationship with the later text as well as the mythology as a whole, criticism of *The Hobbit* has previously been overshadowed by its sequel *The Lord of the Rings*, and even otherwise meticulous critics have frequently treated the two texts as one, or centred the latter at the expense of the former.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this, the text’s unique mediation of space has been largely ignored.

### 3.1 There

In an essay in *Extrapolation*, William H. Green explores the connections between three hugely successful adventure novels; Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1881), H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937). The

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<sup>2</sup> As I explain in Chapter One, Foucault describes heterotopias as “other spaces” or counter-sites that perform particular functions with regard to the space of the “real” world. Heterochronies are a subset of these, and are linked to other moments in time.

<sup>3</sup> Written following the success of *The Hobbit* and intended conceived as a sequel, *The Lord of the Rings* was eventually published in three parts in 1954–1955.



similarities between the first two of these works are clear. Haggard himself claimed to have been inspired by *Treasure Island* to write “a book for boys” (W.H. Green, 53), and both Haggard and Stevenson’s books are adventure novels firmly rooted in their imperial Victorian settings. The connection between these two texts and *The Hobbit*, a secondary world fantasy for children, written in the interwar period, is less obvious.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Tolkien’s main sources are known to be the Old Norse and Old English traditions in which he was an expert. While Maria Sachiko Cecire has noted that Tolkien’s textual sources also include “‘low’ culture encounters” such as the adventure story (“Sources” 32), criticism of Tolkien’s work has tended to focus on the author’s academic interests in medieval literature and philology. Despite this, the adventure story plays a major role in the structure of *The Hobbit*, and in some ways the text *presents* itself as an adventure novel.

The adventure genre rose to prominence at the height of empire. In contrast to the domestic novel, the nineteenth-century adventure story traditionally has the (usually) young British man leaving home and country and travelling to the wider world, where both peril and riches await. As I discuss in my introduction, the adventure novel as a form was dependent on the existence of the physical space of the British empire—“*Because* Britain had an empire, Britons had relatively easy access to exotic lands that promised adventure, romance, and riches beyond belief to those who chose to venture beyond England’s shores” (Kutzer, *Empire’s Children* 1, my emphasis). The availability of this geographical space is thus a consequence of empire. By extension, Martin Green specifically links the rise of the genre to imperialism, claiming that from the middle of the century, children’s literature was “captured by the aristomilitary caste. Adventure took the place of fable; and the adventure took on the characteristics of romance” (220). Green demonstrates that the adventure novel perpetuated imperial ideology, often explicitly, in order to produce a future generation of builders and administrators of empire. For Nicholas Daly, the books in this genre offer the reader “fantasies about the relations of metropolitan and imperial space” (53), by presenting over and over a narrative in which the British subject exerts control over the imperial space.

As I have previously shown, a fascination with accounts, both fictional and otherwise, of exploration and discovery continued through the second half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>4</sup> Haggard’s works do often contain supernatural or fantastical elements, however, and may well be read as fantasy texts.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, in many ways the founding novel of the adventure genre, was even more popular in this period than it had been upon its publication in 1709. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than two hundred editions of the book had been published in Britain; during the Victorian period, on average, more than two new editions of the book were published each year (Phillips 23). Nineteenth-century readers "continued to read the travel literature of earlier times, which made the explorer one of the great heroes of nineteenth-century culture" (M. Green, 213). In the early twentieth century, Arthur Ransome would write a "history of adventure" which included among several works of popular fiction the *Voyages* of Richard Hakluyt (Phillips 5–6). As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter on Ransome's own novels, child readers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would therefore be deeply familiar with the adventure narrative as a form. Tolkien, born in 1892, was an inheritor of this tradition. John Rateliff has noted Tolkien's praise for the works of H. Rider Haggard ("*She* and Tolkien" 146–47) and sees a number of similarities in plot between Tolkien's later novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, and Haggard's *She*. Similarly, William H. Green convincingly maps out a series of plot similarities between *The Hobbit* and *King Solomon's Mines*. Bilbo Baggins, the titular hobbit, is like Haggard's Allan Quatermain, a middle-aged hero rather than the traditional youthful protagonist of adventure; both are reluctant heroes; both restore exiled kings to their rightful thrones. Both stories, along with *Treasure Island*, hinge on maps that lead to treasure. Despite Tolkien's own insistence that *The Hobbit* was in the main "derived from (previously digested) epic, mythology, and fairy-story—not, however, Victorian in authorship, as a rule to which George MacDonald is the chief exception" (quoted in Cecire, "Sources" 37), as I'll show, the book is strongly influenced by the adventure tradition. *The Hobbit* begins with the staid, civilised, and entirely bourgeois Bilbo Baggins sitting outside his house and smoking a pipe, and with no particular desire for adventure. His concerns at this stage are purely domestic; his insistence on such things as doing the dishes and tidying the house are made the subject of much humour in the early chapters of the book. When he finally embarks upon his adventure, he is thrown into panic by his lack of a handkerchief. Over the course of the adventure, the company passes through extreme landscapes; mountains where stone giants throw boulders at one another, caves deep under the earth and forests full of dangerous creatures, eventually to face a dragon. Through a series of adventures in these spaces, Bilbo's skills as a burglar and adventurer develop and he gradually earns the respect of his companions. The hobbit who is caught and interrogated by trolls at the beginning of the adventure is, by its end, a worthy verbal sparring partner for a dragon. Though he thinks longingly of home at several points throughout the text, the Bilbo who returns to the Shire is very different from the one who left it. In many

ways his growth through the course of the novel echoes the development of the adventure hero. As Jean Webb notes, the hero of British children's literature was constructed to embody "the qualities of manliness<sup>5</sup> required to produce both a conquering force and a body coherent with the requirements of England, the center of the empire" (51). The empire in many cases provided a space in which this development could take place. "[T]he exotic territory acts as a testing ground for the manly European subject" (Daly 64); in essence, imperial space functions here as a crisis heterotopia for the protagonist, who is able to develop these traits of "manliness" before inevitably returning home. Middle-earth's "wilderland" performs a similar function for Bilbo, and in this sense too the novel corresponds to the structure of the adventure novel.

If a preoccupation with territorial space was a feature of the Victorian adventure novel and the culture that produced it, in many of the books in the genre, this preoccupation was made concrete in the form of maps. From the fourth printing of *Robinson Crusoe* onwards, many editions of the novel were published with a map of the world upon which Crusoe's supposed journey was marked. This map was a version of one published in Woodes Rogers' *A Cruising Voyage Around the World*, which was said to have been used by Alexander Selkirk, the Scottish sailor whose experiences may have inspired Defoe's book. In addition, it had marked upon it possible latitudes and longitudes for Crusoe's island. In addition to emphasising the connection to Selkirk, then, the book, drawing upon the authority of the map, presented itself as a factual account. Stefan Ekman notes that maps have been included in books for almost as long as printed books have existed; including versions of the Bible, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)<sup>6</sup> (14). They have also historically served as symbolic representations of power: Simon Ryan draws attention to the ways in which maps and globes have been deployed in pictorial representations of powerful figures as a way of signifying their control over the space depicted (116). The modern map, however, has its roots in the age of discovery. As Robert Tally notes, the word "orientation," literally "facing East," has its roots in medieval cartography in which place was understood in relation to the Holy Land in the East (20). From the late fifteenth century, with the voyages of Columbus and Magellan among others, this ordering of the world was no longer feasible.

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<sup>5</sup> As Daly points out, the heroes of the adventure story are "almost invariably male" (62). *The Hobbit* contains no female characters at all; besides a passing reference to Bilbo's mother Belladonna Took, none are even named.

<sup>6</sup> Swift's book also presents itself as an authentic account of a series of journeys. That Swift is able in 1726 to parody the genre by imitating its trappings is an indication of how popular the travel narrative had already become.

While earlier maps had depicted Asia as the top of the map (as it was the furthest east), with the development of the compass, new maps took the magnetic north as the fixed point in relation to which space was ordered. I have already mentioned Siobhan Carroll's analysis, in which she points to the publication of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville's map of Africa, in 1749, as a turning point in European cartography. D'Anville's map marked only the cartographical features which had been empirically verified by European explorers, in accordance with French enlightenment philosophy. This was, as Carroll notes, a seminal point in the development of the map's perceived relationship to the reality it represented. She writes, "The Africa of d'Anville's map is no longer occupied by polyphonic tales of monsters and strange peoples: there is, the map asserts, only one master narrative of African space. There is only one Africa, and d'Anville's map is the authoritative voice on what it contains" (5). These developments in cartography in the "Age of Discovery" then allow the map to present itself as authoritative and objective, depicting the world as it "really is". They "offer themselves as primarily mimetic, functional tools" (Ryan 115). Denis Wood notes that the idea of the map as merely "a representation of part of the earth's surface," rather than an inherently ideological construction, is "a projection, as it were, of the map itself, *the map as it would like to be understood*" and, moreover, naturalises and universalises it, obscuring the map's origins in the rise of the state (18–19). As a result, the map in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had considerable power in the context of empire. To map was to know the world. "The authority of maps lies in their ability to circumscribe geography, by enclosing, defining, coding, orienting, structuring and controlling space" (Phillips 14). Edward Said describes imperialism as "also an act of geographical violence, through which virtually every space in the world is explored, *charted*, and finally brought under control" (225).

The nineteenth-century child's relationship with maps was one that put the child in a position of authority over both the map and the world it represented. With the rise of children's culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came "dissected maps", early jigsaw puzzles in which the world or the nation had to be pieced together. Marketed as educational aids, these maps, as Megan A. Norcia claims, "allowed users to continually rehearse the project of mapping the world by piecing together its parts" ("Puzzling" 5). Norcia connects this to what Foucault describes as an eighteenth-century desire "to tabulate, catalog, classify, and order the world into meaningful hierarchies" ("Puzzling" 2). Meanwhile, the

adventure novel continued to depict (both visually and textually) the world as the birthright of the British child.

While the map in *Robinson Crusoe*, with its plausibly marked latitudes and longitudes, is in the tradition of enlightenment cartography, the maps in *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon's Mines* are somewhat different, and in some senses even more central to an understanding of the texts.<sup>7</sup> Rather than presenting themselves as objective indicators of truth, these maps exist as artefacts within the narrative, are drawn by characters in the novels, and pinpoint particular places for particular purposes. Daly notes that these partially-filled, unreliable quest maps become popular during the late Victorian period in particular (both books were published after 1880), and suggests that the reason for this might be simply because there was little entirely unknown space left to conquer. “As Europe’s imperial powers competed for the remaining pieces of Africa and Asia [...] officially uncharted territories assumed a new importance in the European imagination” (54). It is the unknown land, not the known, which becomes desirable in this period—so that spaces which are already known and mapped must be reimagined as *unknown* or still in some way mysterious. The treasure map makes the territory unknown; it defamiliarises the space, but in making the map solvable by the European characters, does not disrupt the ideological construction of space as ultimately knowable. The quest narrative of which the treasure map is a part performs a similar function in presenting the world (or at least the territory on the map) as a solvable puzzle. In this sense the quest story and its map are rather like the dissected map in that they not only symbolically offer the reader the world, but also the chance to participate in the process of ordering it.

Tolkien critic Tom Shippey dismisses the maps in *The Hobbit* as “[adding] nothing to the story but decoration and a ‘Here be tygers’ feel of quaintness” (76) to the book. However, as I have shown, maps form an important aspect of the adventure narrative, and in the case of *The Hobbit* have in fact been fundamental to the text from its very inception. The earliest draft of the text contains a sketch for the map that appears in the final version as “Thror’s map” (Hammond and Scull, 40). The original manuscript of *The Hobbit* submitted to Allen & Unwin in 1936 contained five maps, of which two were retained in the final manuscript.

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<sup>7</sup> In the case of *Treasure Island*, the map actually precedes the book—Stevenson drew the map for his nephew before inventing a story about it.

These two maps serve very different functions, and it is necessary to discuss them both in detail here.

“Thror’s map” is the first of the two maps included with the text of *The Hobbit*. This map, we are told, exists within the world of the book—it purports to be a replica of the map used by Thorin, Bilbo and their companions within the text. Tolkien had planned for this map to resemble the one mentioned in the text as far as possible—in an earlier version of the manuscript he had suggested that it could be folded out from within the book, and could have runes printed on the other side of the paper to recreate the effect of the “moon runes” mentioned in the text (*Hobbit* 50).<sup>8</sup> This proved to be too expensive, and the maps were eventually used as the book’s endpapers.

Thror’s map takes the form of a treasure map, and contains only those landmarks pertinent to the finding of the mountain and the secret door that will lead to the dwarves’ lost treasure. Large spaces on the map are therefore left blank, and provide no information to the reader—both the reader of the map itself, and the reader of the book, who finds this map on the front page. However, further information pertinent to the correct use of the map is also provided in the form of text—to the left of a map is an image of a pointing finger along with a description of the secret passage, and, when the map is held up to moonlight, the aforementioned moon runes offer further information about the finding of the tunnel. In the map provided alongside the text of *The Hobbit*, this second set of instructions is also clearly visible, so that rather than being largely blank, the map appears to be covered for the most part in written text. However, this text is in the form of runes, and so is likely to be illegible to the child (or adult!) reader. To arrive at the solution for this map, the reader must first find and translate the textual elements on the page and only then deduce the location of the treasure. Significantly, Gandalf, in giving the map to Thorin, informs him that his father’s one wish had been “for his son to *read the map* and use the key” (58, my emphasis); here the act of reading the map itself seems to take primacy, or at least to be given an equal status, over the claiming of the treasure whose location it indicates.

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<sup>8</sup> The device of printing the moon runes on the back of the paper so that they could be seen if held up to the light was eventually used in a 1979 poster of the map issued by Allen & Unwin.

This map defamiliarises the territory in another way also, though this too is unlikely to be visible to most new readers. Tolkien's original map had had to be redrawn to suit the layout of the endpapers. As a result, East was at the top of the new map. The map includes a compass with the directions provided, but these are also in the form of runes. However, the text itself points out this change, claiming that this unfamiliar orientation is a Dwarvish convention, when it is in fact a retrospective alteration to the text brought on by the practicalities of publishing. This realignment of the map serves as an unintentional reminder that the map's representation of the real is curtailed by its own materiality. Thrór's map may here be read productively in the context of the history of the development of the modern map. In the sixteenth century, mapmakers faced the difficulty of representing a spherical space on a two-dimensional surface. A popular solution to this problem was the "Mercator projection", created by Gerhard Mercator in 1569. This cylindrical projection was convenient for nautical navigation and is still used in many present day maps. However, the Mercator projection sacrificed accuracy for practicality, exaggerating the space of the Northern hemisphere in order to serve the needs of navigators. As Robert Tally shows, this distortion of the space performed both an ideological function (in aggrandising the Northern hemisphere and thus making Northern Europe seem disproportionately large) and a practical one—it thus "had greater practical value for seventeenth-century sailors than would a more factually accurate chart" (24).

While Thrór's map may have much in common with the late-nineteenth century treasure map, this realignment, though an accident of circumstance, also places it in the tradition of the pre-modern map, which also placed the East (the direction of Jerusalem) at the top. Like the pre-modern map, it makes no claim to represent the totality of the space, and only a few important geographical features are marked—the forest of Mirkwood, through which the company must travel, the Long Lake at the foot of the mountain, and the Lonely Mountain itself. The reader's understanding of the space is thus tied to the narrative of the characters moving through it. Kathleen Kirby describes the "[pre-modern] form of spatial mediation" as one that is "based on narrative" (41). Michel de Certeau makes a distinction between the forms of the map (which is, for him, "a plane projection totalizing observations") and the "itinerary" (a discursive series of operations") as separate "languages" of space. (119). Both the treasure map and the pre-modern map by this definition are itineraries.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In a much later work, *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996), Diana Wynne Jones recognises and parodies the impulse in twentieth century fantasy (much of it inspired by Tolkien) to present a map upon which the

Despite the fact that it only features those landmarks relevant to the quest, and unlike the empirical maps of d’Anville, Thror’s map gives the reader a great deal of superfluous information, much of it focused around the edges of the map. So, for example, we are told that further East “lie the Iron hills where is Dain” and that beyond the map’s southern border “in Esgaroth upon the long lake dwell men,” and illustrations of such symbols as a spider’s web and Smaug the dragon warn the reader of the map of the particular dangers that lie ahead. We are also shown that “far to the North are the Grey Mountains and the Withered Heath whence came the Great Worms”, a warning that echoes the “hic sunt dracones” (or “here be dragons”) that is a cliché of the medieval map, but that in Tolkien’s secondary-world fantasy can be regarded as a factual representation of the space.<sup>10</sup>

The “Map of the Wilderland”, the second map in the book, reverts to the more familiar cardinal alignment and has North at the top. While the various landmarks that the characters and the reader will have encountered are all marked here, and such creatures as Smaug and the spiders of Mirkwood are disproportionately large, the map also shows topographical and other landmarks which have no particular importance within the plot. This map is considerably more detailed, and appears much more like an official depiction of the territory. Once again, it is an accident of publishing that most editions of the book place this map in the final pages, but the result is to present to the reader, on the one hand, a movement from the cryptic quest map to the more complete and “solved” second map, and on the other, a chronological shift from an earlier cartographical style to a more recent one.

Other maps of this second type also exist as objects within the text. We are told that Bilbo “loved maps, and in his hall there hung a large one of the Country Round with all his favourite walks marked on it in red ink” (52). Despite Bilbo’s secret love of adventure, it is significant that the map which he possesses is of territory that he knows well and traverses regularly. Bilbo’s love of maps is one of many aspects of the character that align him with Victorian and Edwardian readers, as well as adventurers. As I have already shown, the map

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information presented is dictated entirely by the needs of the plot, so that “[i]f you take this Tour, you are going to have to visit every single place on this Map” (3).

<sup>10</sup> The notion that this was a common way of marking the edge of known territory in medieval maps is a myth, and “hic sunt dracones” is only found on one medieval map—the Lenox Globe. However, it is a widespread myth, and it is possible that it is deliberately invoked here to recall the tradition as a whole.



was a central aspect both of the adventure novel and of the culture that produced it. In this context, in books like *The Hobbit* and Ransome's Swallows and Amazons series, the inclusion of maps, particularly in the form of endpapers, signals the affinity of these texts with the tradition of the adventure story. Thus Shippey's dismissal of the maps in *The Hobbit* ignores the extent to which they serve, not just as tools for understanding (and authenticating) the narrative and its spatial relations, but as markers of genre.

Roz Kaveney suggests that Tolkien's inclusion of maps is "much in the same spirit that he provided endless glossaries and appendices" ("Maps" 624), suggesting that their inclusion is a part of the effort to make of Middle-earth a complete and internally consistent world. If in the 1930s, maps at the beginning of a book might have indicated that the book was in the adventure tradition, in the next few decades they would become ubiquitous within the fantasy genre as well. Tolkien was not the first fantasy author; nor was he the first to set his works within a fictional world. However, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are crucial to the development of modern-day fantasy. Edward James believes that Tolkien's greatest contribution to the genre was in "normalizing the idea of a secondary world" (65). Though fictional settings had been utilised by other fantasy authors, the fully-realised setting of Middle-earth, complete with its detailed histories, genealogies and languages, was something entirely new. James notes the "explosion of genre fantasy" that takes place in the wake of Tolkien's and C.S. Lewis's works. Gary K. Wolfe notes that fantasy only developed a clear market identity in America once paperback editions of Tolkien became available (24). As I have already discussed, Brian Attebery places *The Lord of the Rings* at the centre of his "fuzzy set" of modern fantasy.

Among the conventions of fantasy that Tolkien's imitators would enthusiastically adopt was the fantasy map. Farah Mendlesohn describes the use of maps in later fantasy narratives:

Tolkien set the trend for maps and prehistory, establishing a pattern for the quest narrative in which the portal is not encoded solely in the travelogue discovery of what lies ahead, but in the insistence that there is past and place *behind*, and that what lies behind must be thoroughly known and unquestioned before the journey begins. [...] maps are a substitute for place and an indication that we have to travel; they also, however, fix the interpretation of a landscape. Maps are no more geography than

chronology and legend are history, but in portal-quest fantasies they complete the denial of discourse. (*Rhetorics* 14)

Mendlesohn's suggestion that fantasy maps, in fixing a landscape, constitute the denial of discourse, i.e. that they offer up a single interpretation of the landscape and present it as objective and unquestionable, echoes work by postcolonial critics who have demonstrated the extent to which colonial discourse was textual in nature. As Tiffin and Lawson describe it, colonialism "is an operation of discourse, and as an operation of discourse it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation" (16). The colonial map is only one example of this—as Siobhan Carroll notes, the advent of imperial cartography replaces the polyvalent mediaeval map with "only one master narrative of [...] space" (5). As Tiffin and Lawson note, "Imperial textuality appropriates, distorts, erases, but it also *contains*" (19). In this context, one of the attractions of "world-building" in an age of postcolonial resistance is that the secondary world, built from scratch, is entirely knowable and circumscribed (the word itself derived from the Latin for "to write around") by our understanding of it. Elizabeth Massa Hoiem sees in Tolkien's histories of Middle-earth an uneasy link between the roles of artist and coloniser, noting that time and again colonisers in these stories are characterized as spurred on by creative vision, which leads to disaster (76). She states:

Imperialism produces a fictional reality as it creates borders by drawing maps, creates countries by assigning names, creates identities with descriptive travel accounts. The same scientific methods and theories applied to flora and fauna are used to create race as a supposed inviolate category [...] this ordering power is also the method of writers. It is, however, especially characteristic of the fantasy writer, who creates entire worlds by drawing maps and making up languages. Tolkien calls this power subcreation. (84)

As I demonstrate above, "On Fairy Stories" frequently returns to the idea of fantasy taking place in a separate space, the realm of "Faërie". Tolkien's descriptions of this space are expressed in terms that recall colonial rhetoric in which land is both feminised (as in Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, where the treasure map explicitly presents the land as a naked, recumbent woman), inhabited by treacherous natives, and dangerous to the European outsider. Faërie is fertile, "pre-eminently desirable" (40), perilous and populated with "cheaters of men" (18). The creation of a secondary world along with a set of carefully differentiated "races", maps and languages allows Tolkien to perform upon it exactly the sort of linguistic, anthropological, cartographic ordering that had been imposed upon large

swathes of the real world, even though, as Hoiem shows, the texts frequently express discomfort with such an ordering. Mendlesohn's analysis suggests that this totalising vision of the fantastic secondary world subsequently becomes a feature of the genre as a whole.

However, Tolkien's presentation of his own secondary world seems somewhat more complex than this reading of later fantastic texts allows. In "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien speaks of the importance of "the inner consistency of reality" (*Tree*, 64) in shaping belief in a secondary world. Yet writings on such a world might never be fully consistent with one another, or present a complete picture. In a letter to Naomi Mitchison, Tolkien describes "the *game of inventing a country* – an endless one, because even a committee of experts in different branches could not complete the overall picture" (*Letters* 196, italics in original). What this suggests is that for Tolkien, in order to provide an authentic representation of the space it depicts, the act of subcreation must of necessity be polyphonic and even to some extent self-contradictory.

This is clear in *The Silmarillion* (1977), a book on which Tolkien had begun work much earlier, but which was posthumously published. *The Silmarillion* is a mythic account of the history of Middle-earth, from its creation until the events of *The Lord of the Rings*. According to Christopher Tolkien, the editor and compiler of his father's work, Tolkien "came to conceive *The Silmarillion* as a compilation, a compendious narrative, made long afterwards from sources of great diversity (poems, and annals, and oral tales) that had survived in a long tradition" (*Silmarillion*, x). In *The Lord of the Rings*, the possibility that the book we are reading exists within Middle-earth itself is hinted at within the text. The reader is led to believe that the memoirs authored by Bilbo and his relative Frodo Baggins form the basis for the books that the reader knows as *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*; Bilbo's memoirs are even titled "There and Back Again", the alternate title of *The Hobbit*.<sup>11</sup> Jane Chance draws attention to the avuncular voice of the narrator of *The Hobbit* (a voice which, Tolkien claimed, his children hated), and suggests that the intrusive voice serves to remind us of the narrator's presence (Chance 49–50). *The Hobbit* is not merely a children's book describing events taking place in Middle-earth, then; it signals its *awareness* that it is a

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<sup>11</sup> The dust jacket for *The Hobbit* designed by Tolkien has a border of runes which, translated, read "THE HOBBIT OR THERE AND BACK AGAIN BEING THE RECORD OF A YEARS JOURNEY MADE BY BILBO BAGGINS OF HOBBITON COMPILED FROM HIS MEMOIRS BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND PUBLISHED BY GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN LTD" (Hammond and Scull, 139).

children's book, possibly even a children's book that exists *within* Middle-earth. Rather than a single narrative of Middle-earth which presents itself as objective or removed from the events it describes, Tolkien gives us instead "a body of overlapping, competing, endlessly revised, and often incomplete texts" (Flieger 43). Read in this way, the mythology of Middle-earth does not shut down discourse; it expands it. Individual texts are fallible and open to questioning without disrupting the logic of the secondary world; the historian (or the philologist) of Middle-earth must piece together fragments and attempt to make meaning of them.

*The Hobbit* offers us multiple examples of these attempts to piece together fragments of text or language and to make meaning out of them. An early instance of this occurs when Bilbo is captured by a group of trolls. Frightened and yielding to their questioning, he stammers that he is "a bur—a hobbit," (which the trolls hear as "burrahobbit") and when interrogated about the number of his companions replies that there are both "lots" and "none at all" (73–76). The trolls are forced to try and make coherent meaning from these nonsensical and contradictory statements. In this they achieve partial success—upon discovering the presence of the dwarves they decide that Bilbo's "lots" and "none at all" could mean that he had several companions, none of whom were "burrahobbits"—but notably, rather than the language being the source of meaning, meaning is retroactively imposed upon language. Later in the book, Bilbo's identity will once again become the subject of a puzzle—his encounter with the dragon Smaug takes the form of a series of riddles about his identity. And of course riddles are central to the encounter with Gollum, in the chapter titled "Riddles in the Dark", in which Bilbo is forced into a riddling contest upon which his life depends. Yet the fragmentary nature of the body of texts about Middle-earth may be read as merely a "strategy of presentation" (Flieger 49), designed to give the mythos credibility, and the act of piecing together fragments in order to produce meaning can be compared to both the treasure map and the quest narrative itself insofar as both involve a form of "solving" the territory. In her work on the emergence of dissected maps as educational tools, Megan A. Norcia notes that the activity of "puzzling" emerged from the Enlightenment desire to order the world. The dissected map served imperial ideology by "charging children with the responsibility of assembling the diverse pieces of the world into a comprehensible whole through a uniform methodology" ("Puzzling" 3). The theme of "riddling" in *The Hobbit*, I would argue, serves a similar purpose—the reader is constantly invited to rehearse the act of making meaning by solving a set of given clues.

However, such a reading is incomplete unless it acknowledges the extent to which language and texts within *The Hobbit* are presented as fundamentally unstable and unreliable. A major example of this can be found in the book's presentation of maps. Early in the novel, as the characters argue over whether or not they should investigate a particular hill, one of the dwarves notes that "These parts are none too well known and are too near the mountains. Travellers seldom come this way now. The old maps are no use: things have changed for the worse and the road is unguarded" (69). According to Douglas A. Anderson, the original manuscript instead read "Policemen never come so far, and the map-makers have not reached this country yet" (*The Hobbit* 69 n13). Anderson sees the change as significant because of the removal of the anachronistic word "policeman" (and I will discuss the many anachronisms of the text in the second half of this chapter); however I would suggest that the far more significant change is the implication, not that the territory remains unmapped, but that the existing maps are *unreliable*. Here, the map is shown to lack power: it is unable to fix or circumscribe the reality that it purports to depict. Thror's map also demonstrates a lack of control over the landscape. The map contains hidden instructions which can only be read in particular light, at particular times of day, on particular days of the year (and the door it leads to can also only be opened in particular light on a particular day of the year)—far from exerting authority over the space it depicts, the map is dependent on that space in order to be read. And the text of the map too is unstable—the moon runes are only sporadically visible. When Gandalf asks Elrond if there is any more writing on the map, Elrond replies that there is "none to be seen by this moon" (96), leaving open the possibility that further, unseen text might be discovered. Thror's map in fact exemplifies Flieger's contention, quoted above, that Tolkien provides the reader with "overlapping", "competing", and "incomplete" texts—it is a palimpsest upon which different layers of meaning are revealed or concealed at particular moments.

The reader of *The Silmarillion* will be aware that the landscape of Middle-earth undergoes significant, and even cataclysmic changes over the period since its creation. *The Hobbit*, though it is concerned with a much smaller time scale, nevertheless reinforces the idea that the landscape is mutable.

Those lands had changed much since the days when dwarves dwelt in the Mountain, days which most people now remembered only as a very shadowy tradition. They had

changed even in recent years, and since the last news that Gandalf had had of them. Great floods and rains had swollen the waters that flowed east; and there had been an earthquake or two (which some were inclined to attribute to the dragon-alluding to him chiefly with a curse and an ominous nod in the direction of the Mountain). The marshes and bogs had spread wider and wider on either side. Paths had vanished, and many a rider and wanderer too, if they had tried to find the lost ways across. The elf-road through the wood which the dwarves had followed on the advice of Beorn now came to a doubtful and little used end at the eastern edge of the forest; only the river offered any longer a safe way from the skirts of Mirkwood in the North to the mountain-shadowed plains beyond. (242)

The Map of the Wilderland at the end of the book depicts the forest of Mirkwood, including the elf-road (which does indeed seem to come to an end before the edge of the forest). Critical work on Tolkien has tended to take for granted the authority of the maps—Shippey, for example, only notes that the maps in *The Lord of the Rings* are more detailed and thus “give Middle-earth that air of solidity and extent both in space and time” (79), a reading which suggests that *The Hobbit*’s relative lack of this “solidity” is merely a flaw; while Mendlesohn, as I have already shown, reads Tolkien’s maps in the context of later fantasies in which the authority of the map to circumscribe the fantasy land is an unquestioned feature of the genre. Yet the repeated emphasis within *The Hobbit* on the changing landscape and the unreliability of maps calls into question the reliability of the particular maps to which the reader has access.

The instability of text within *The Hobbit* may also be read as part of a larger preoccupation within the book with the unstable nature of language itself. The book opens with an exchange between Bilbo and Gandalf in which the former greets the latter with a “good morning”:

“What do you mean?” [Gandalf] said. “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”

[...]

“What a lot of things you do use *Good morning* for!” said Gandalf. “Now you mean that you want to get rid of me, and that it won’t be good till I move off.” (32–33)

As I have already shown, *The Hobbit* is a book in which meaning is being constantly debated, in the form of riddles and puzzles and fragments of language. The above exchange is, then, only the first of several instances within the book in which language is revealed to be layered, multivocal, and unstable.

And most significantly, the text of *The Hobbit* itself is unreliable. The version of the novel that appeared in 1937 is not the version with which most readers are familiar. Substantial revisions were made, particularly to the “Riddles in the Dark” chapter, in order to make the story consistent with that of *The Lord of the Rings*. In the original version of that chapter, Bilbo and Gollum agree to a competition in which one of the stakes is Gollum’s “present.” Bilbo has already found the ring, and when Gollum loses the game, tricks him into leading Bilbo out of the caves (*Hobbit* 122–123 n17; 128–131 n25). In the later, better-known version, the power and importance of the ring to Gollum are increased; rather than risking his “precious”, Gollum will show Bilbo the way out of the caves should he lose the game (120–36). Bilbo does not at first tell the dwarves about the ring or the part it plays in his escape:

Then they wanted to know all about his adventures after they had lost him, and he sat down and told them everything—except about the finding of the ring (“not just now” he thought). They were particularly interested in the riddle-competition, and shuddered most appreciatively at his description of Gollum.

“And then I couldn’t think of any other question with him sitting beside me,” ended Bilbo; “so I said ‘what’s in my pocket?’ And he couldn’t guess in three goes. So I said: ‘what about your promise? Show me the way out!’ But he came at me to kill me, and I ran, and fell over, and he missed me in the dark. Then I followed him, because I heard him talking to himself. He thought I really knew the way out, and so he was making for it. And then he sat down in the entrance, and I could not get by. So I jumped over him and escaped, and ran down to the gate.”

“What about guards?” they asked. “Weren’t there any?”

“O yes! lots of them; but I dodged ’em. I got stuck in the door, which was only open a crack, and I lost lots of buttons,” he said sadly looking at his torn clothes. “But I squeezed through all right—and here I am.” (140)

The prologue to *The Lord of the Rings* tells in brief the second version of this story, but adds that this was *not* the version Bilbo had told to his companions. “To them his account was that

Gollum had promised to give him a present if he won the game [...]” (*Hobbit* 140 n2). This reference to the earlier version of the text complicates matters considerably. The prologue seems to contradict the later version of *The Hobbit* in which Bilbo “sat down and told them everything—except about the finding of the ring”, but it also declares the earlier version of the book to be a lie—not just one told to the dwarves by Bilbo, but by the text to the reader of the 1937 *Hobbit*. Adam Roberts sees the rewriting of *The Hobbit* as a significant moment within the Tolkien canon; “a reconceptualising (Tolkien purists might say: a distillation or focusing) of his now-celebrated legendarium. No longer a folk-story, it now becomes a grand sacramental drama of incarnation, atonement, and redemption [... in which] everything has to happen for a reason” (96–97). *The Hobbit* is thus absorbed into a grand narrative—but, paradoxically, this is done at the cost of the text’s own credibility. The later version of *The Hobbit*, then, embodies the tension between two conflicting versions of Middle-earth; one in which competing, fallible texts and narratives exist and versions of the truth can only be pieced together, and another in which all is consistent and knowable, if not known.

Usefully, Jes Batts, who reads in the later work *The Lord of the Rings* a fable about the power of the gaze, questions the position of the reader with regard to Tolkien’s Middle-earth. “Are we, the innocent and curious readers, viewing *The Lord of the Rings* with the gaze of the anthropologist—the ethnographer?” (913–914). If, as I have suggested, the secondary-world fantasy genre allows the author and reader to inscribe and gaze upon a completely knowable space, *The Hobbit* offers at least a partial resistance in suggesting that the texts (including the maps) thus inscribed are fallible.

### 3.2 And Back Again

The previous section of this chapter has discussed Middle-earth as an “other” space, and has argued that the secondary world in this case in part carries out (and in part challenges) the functions performed by “imperial” space in the adventure novel.<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Massa Hoiem rejects such attempts to read Tolkien in the tradition of the adventure novel, in large part because she sees Tolkien’s attitude towards empire as very different from that of these earlier works, and rooted in later modernism (76). As I have shown, a fruitful reading of *The Hobbit* in the adventure tradition is possible precisely because of the ways in which it breaks away from or sits in complex relation with the ideological functions of that genre. Nevertheless,

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<sup>12</sup> I have discussed in some detail my usage of this term in Chapter One.



Hoiem is correct in asserting that Tolkien's work belongs to a later period in which, according to Jed Esty,

At the point of imperial decline [...] a newly insular English culture reinvests in its own autochthonous origin stories. Where orientalist discourse had located civilizational origins in the colonies (Egyptian monuments, Indian languages, Palestinian religions), the new discourse of historical self-consumption uncovers the roots of contemporary life in the native English soil (Druidic monuments, Anglo-Saxon languages, Arthurian legends). Country houses and medieval heraldry replace Elgin Marbles and Egyptology. (41)

In the previous chapter, I discussed the process by which Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* books shift in focus, from the outward-facing imperial narrative to one focused on British landscape and history. In what follows, I will examine the role of *The Hobbit* in this "discourse of historical self-consumption", and in the context of the oft-repeated claim that Tolkien wished to create "a mythology for England" will argue that Middle-earth is a "heterochrony", a space "linked to the accumulation of time" (Foucault 26).

The claim that the Middle-earth legendarium constitutes a mythology for England can be traced to a letter written by Tolkien to one of his publishers, Milton Waldman of Collins. In it, Tolkien describes what he perceives as a lack within English culture of:

[...] stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff. (*Letters*, 145)

As Dimitra Fimi notes, while Tolkien often referred to his work as "mythology", he never actually used the phrase "a mythology for England", which is often used in reference to his work, and for which Fimi credits Tolkien's biographer Humphrey Carpenter (50). However, she adds, Tolkien does in one letter admit to a desire to "restore to the English and epic tradition and present them with a mythology of their own" (quoted in Fimi, *Tolkien* 207 n9). The claim that Tolkien wished to create such a mythology is thus broadly accurate, even though the phrase itself may not be. Fimi reads Tolkien's desire for a national mythology in the context of several attempts to rediscover and reconstruct national narratives in Northern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As she points out, while many of these reconstructions (such as James Macpherson's epic poem purportedly based on manuscripts by

the bard Ossian) were pure fabrications which were soon revealed as such, others, though their “authenticity” was compromised, would nevertheless survive in the national cultures of their countries (52). The mention of Finnish legends in the letter quoted above is of particular significance here. Tolkien was familiar with Elias Lönnrot’s compilation of the *Kalevala* (1849), which had played a major role in the development of a Finnish identity distinct from those of Sweden and Russia, and subsequently contributed to the establishment of Finland as a nation. Lönnrot had compiled and supplemented a body of oral poems from the folk tradition, in the process creating what would become the primary text of Finnish national mythology. Thus although the *Kalevala* could not be considered truly “authentic”, containing as it did Lönnrot’s modern additions, it was able to function as a national myth for Finland.

Tolkien’s own project has a similarly complex relationship with the idea of authenticity. Citing Tolkien’s regret that “English” culture had been wiped out by the Norman Conquest, C. Butler suggests that the *legendarium* constitutes his “attempt at an ‘asterisk-mythology’ (to adapt Tom Shippey’s usage)—that is, a reconstruction of what an English mythology might have looked like had it survived” (“Worldbuilding” 115). Butler is referring here to the concept of the “asterisk-word”, described by Shippey in *The Road to Middle-earth* as a word of whose use philologists have no surviving examples, but whose existence can be inferred and reconstructed (Shippey 52).

John D. Rateliff notes that in the “Pryftan Fragment” (a six-page fragment from an earlier manuscript of *The Hobbit*, named after the dragon in this version of the story), there appear a number of real-world place names, including the Gobi Desert, the Hindu Kush and China. Other early versions of the mythology allot names to specific places—the city known as “Kortirion”, for example, was intended to be Warwick (Rateliff, *History* 17). Butler quotes a 1967 letter in which Tolkien maps out Middle-earth over the terrain of the real world: “If Hobbiton and Rivendell are taken (as intended) to be at about the latitude of Oxford, then Minas Tirith, 600 miles south, is at about the latitude of Florence” (quoted in Butler, “Worldbuilding” 116). Such specific geographical equivalences did not, however, fit with what was known of the history and geology of the world and had to be jettisoned. Dimitra Fimi argues that Tolkien had a “twofold vision” of his own work, desiring at various points to create “an English counterpart” to other national myths, and to perform an act of sub-creation that would stand independently (*Tolkien* 61). Yet, Butler argues, Tolkien’s suggestion that the

events of the legendarium took place far enough in the past for “literary credibility” is proof of “how tenaciously he was prepared to cling to his original conception of a vital link—geographical and temporal—between Middle-earth and his own homeland” (“Worldbuilding” 116).

Tolkien’s attempts to render Middle-earth plausible by setting it in the very distant past find an echo in his lecture “On Fairy Stories”. Early in the lecture he notes that fairy tales which made the supernatural beings physically diminutive became popular after “the great voyages had begun to make the world seem too narrow to hold both men and elves” (11)—the lack of a separate geographical space for these wondrous beings did not, therefore, disprove their existence. Tolkien’s own solution to the problem of creating a fantastical space while retaining a connection to our own world is thus to set his legendarium so far back in our own past that we cannot recognise its world as our own. This “structural non-specificity” had another advantage, at a historical moment when aggressively nationalist art was under particular scrutiny. Adam Roberts suggests that one reason for the popularity of Middle-earth is that it appeared to offer a model for drawing on cultural traditions while jettisoning “the poisonous nationalist, racist and belligerent associations those traditions have accumulated over the centuries” (156). He points out that Tolkien and Wagner both draw from the same mythic northern-European heritage, yet Tolkien’s form of “structural non-specificity” “rushed in to fill the gap that more culturally specific art had supplied before that kind of art was discredited by the 1940s” (158). Questions of heritage and national identity were in any case rather fraught in the case of England. This was due to the existence of a distinct British national identity, comprised of the four nations within the British Isles as well as, to some extent, the British colonies. English dominance within the British Isles and over the British imperial identity meant that the distinction between “British” and “English” was often elided (Fimi, *Tolkien* 53, Kumar 2). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the two terms signified very different forms of national identity, which I correspond to my own terminology of “domestic” and “imperial” space. Tolkien himself appeared to reject a “British” imperial identity, claiming in a 1945 letter to his son Christopher that “... as I know nothing about British or American imperialism in the Far East that does not fill me with regret and disgust, I am afraid I am not over supported by a glimmer of patriotism in this remaining war. I would not subscribe a penny to it, let alone a son, were I a free man.” (*Letters* 115). This rejection of Britishness also led Tolkien to reject the Arthurian legends as a possible source for the

national mythology which he craved, precisely because they are British rather than English. (*Letters* 144)<sup>13</sup>.

Ann Blake, Leela Gandhi and Sue Thomas suggest that, in the twentieth century in particular, England itself becomes a “contact zone” for “writers whose perspectives have been shaped by historically localised varieties of British colonialism and continuing processes of anti-colonialism and decolonization” (2).<sup>14</sup> Tolkien himself had been born in Bloemfontein, though his mother returned to England with her two sons in 1895, when Tolkien was only three years old. In a biography of the author, Humphrey Carpenter suggests that the author’s preoccupation with Englishness, and specifically with the English heritage of his mother’s family, the Suffields (his father’s family were of German ancestry and relatively recent immigrants to Britain), was connected to the fact that Tolkien had spent his early life in South Africa:

He discovered that though the family was now to be found chiefly in Birmingham, its origins were in the quiet, Worcestershire town of Evesham, where Suffields had lived for many generations. Being in a sense a homeless child—for his journey from South Africa and the wanderings that now began gave him a sense of rootlessness—he held on to the concept of Evesham in particular and the whole West Midland area in general as being his true home. (19)

Tolkien’s desire for an English rather than a British identity is then, paradoxically, connected to the fact that, as a child born in colonised South Africa, he is British, and an outsider to England.<sup>15</sup> Jed Esty sees Tolkien as a participant in a larger trend towards the romanticisation of Englishness in the 1930s. Linking Tolkien to T.S. Eliot, and calling them both “outsiders-cum-insiders,” he notes that

[B]oth writers manage to glimpse an innocent ideal of Englishness underneath the metropolitan crust of fading industry and empire. Tolkien’s fiction evokes timeless, rural England: a country shire, plenty of food, artisanal production, stable social

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<sup>13</sup> The subject of the “Britishness” of Arthurian myth will be analysed in detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>14</sup> The term “contact zone” is used with reference to the work of Mary Louise Pratt, discussed in more detail in Chapters One and Four. The idea of England as a contact zone for postcolonial writers is further examined in Chapters Five and Six.

<sup>15</sup> In the following chapter I discuss the children’s fantasies of Tolkien’s friend and writing companion C.S. Lewis, whose complicated relationship with his Irish identity makes him similarly a partial outsider to Britishness.

relations, a commonly felt sense of tribal belonging, the warm comforts of ale, roasts, and tobacco after dinner. (122)

This quotation from Esty suggests that this conception of Englishness is innocent of both modernity and empire—and, presumably, of the belligerent associations of recent nationalist movements as described by Roberts. Fimi mentions the rise of what Krishan Kumar refers to as “Anglo-Saxonism” in this period—the “English” past thus imagined is located in the period before the Norman invasion and thus predates and is presented as separate from the more recent developments of imperialism and modernity.<sup>16</sup> A contemporary children’s fantasy, T.H. White’s Arthurian retelling *The Sword in the Stone*, which was published a year after *The Hobbit*, explicitly takes the Norman invasion as its break with real-world history and imagines an alternate mythical past in which “Merlin’s Isle of Gramarye” was invaded, not by William of Normandy, but by Uther Pendragon.

Hazel Sheeky Bird describes the “escape” from modernity into pastoralism carried out by a number of children’s writers during this period, including Tolkien, W.W. Tarn and E.A. Wyke-Smith, and argues persuasively that escapism in the pejorative sense is not an accurate description for the project these authors are attempting. Connecting Tolkien’s invocation of the pastoral to its use in the “camping and tramping” genre (see previous chapter), Bird suggests that the pastoral landscape performs the function of “recovery” described by Tolkien in “On Fairy Stories”. Tolkien lists “recovery, escape, [and] consolation” (*Tree* 52) as the functions of fantasy, clarifying that critics of escape “are confusing [...] the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter” (56). Tolkien seems to see each of these as an end in its own right, though Bird sees them also as vital elements in the formulation of sympathetic bonds and therefore “a powerful means of drawing strength for the future—and by 1937 the need for a gathering of strength and mutual understanding must have been more than apparent to most” (Bird, “Pastoral” 59). For Tolkien, then, as for the writers of camping and tramping fiction, recovery is located in the English landscape. This investment of the terrain with transformative potential sits alongside the “reenchantment” of the English landscape described by Esty (118).

Within the texts, the characters most closely associated with England are the hobbits themselves. For Esty, “Tolkien’s hobbits offer a distilled and historically apt version of little

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<sup>16</sup> See Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

England's self-image on the eve of the Second World War" (122). According to Tolkien's early, abortive attempts to map the geography of Middle-earth onto our own, the Shire is located in the south of England—Tolkien's own home (Butler, "Worldbuilding" 116–117). Tom Shippey notes the use of English place names for the Shire in the sections of *The Lord of the Rings* which deal with the hobbit homeland—and "the Shire" itself is a name with an English feel. He concludes that "the Shire is 'calqued' on England, 'calquing' being a linguistic term to mean that process by which elements of a compound word are translated bit by bit to make a new word in another language" (77).<sup>17</sup> Even Bilbo's own name is English; "Baggins" appears in W.E. Haigh's *Glossary of the Dialect of the Huddersfield District*, for which Tolkien had written a prologue in 1928. The word there is defined as a substantial meal between meals, a concept dear to Tolkien's hobbits (Shippey 56).

As Bird further demonstrates, so complete is the equation between England and the Shire where the hobbits live, that a 2012 British Library exhibition titled *Writing Britain* featured Tolkien's painting of the Shire ("Pastoral" 52). That painting, titled "The Hill: Hobbiton across the water", was the first of Tolkien's illustrations for *The Hobbit* to be finished. It depicts a rural idyll, including cultivated and enclosed fields, gardens, and open land in the distance; in the second edition of the book a colour plate of the image was used, which revealed the gardens to be in bloom and the whole scene to be lit by bright sunlight (Hammond and Scull 31). However, the oft-repeated assertion (made by both Esty and Bird) that this pastoral landscape is central to the construction of the hobbits is not really borne out by the text of *The Hobbit*. It is only in *The Lord of the Rings* that the reader is given a sense of the Shire as a pastoral space and a rural community. *The Lord of the Rings* is very different in tone to *The Hobbit*, and while the Shire is frequently invoked in the later book in the context of what Michael C. Drout calls "*heimweh*", or "home pain" ("Tower" 178–180), in *The Hobbit*, other than that single illustration of Hobbiton, we see very little of the country apart from Bilbo's own house.<sup>18</sup> In this, it is further in keeping with the tradition of the adventure novel, which has little focus on the domestic landscape.

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<sup>17</sup> As an example, Shippey gives the French word "haut-parleur", derived from the English "loudspeaker" (77).

<sup>18</sup> Drout prefers the term "*heimweh*" to "nostalgia", which, he notes, is "not an actual Latin word, but a coinage" translated from the German *heimweh*, and which he claims has in contemporary English usage acquired the sense of being merely "a slightly wistful thinking of past things" ("Tower" 178).

Bird is nonetheless correct in her assertion that “the Shire of *The Hobbit* is recognisably English” (“Pastoral” 56), but it is important to note that what we see of the Shire is the interior part of Bilbo’s own home, Bag End. The house is luxurious, “with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats” (29), and Bilbo himself is presented as house-proud and careful of his possessions, expressing great anxiety over the dwarves’ attempts to wash his dishes, for example. (Returning to the Shire after his adventures at the end of the book, Bilbo is horrified to discover that people have been entering his house while “not even wiping their feet on the mat” (360).) Deborah Cohen has described the process by which, in the nineteenth century, as consumer goods became increasingly available, “house-pride came to define what it meant to be British” (viii). The final illustration by Tolkien in the book, titled “The Hall at Bag End, Residence of B. Baggins Esquire”, provides us a glimpse of the interior of Bilbo’s home. For Hammond and Scull, it is “an oasis of familiarity. Chairs, tables, mirrors, rugs, a clock, a barometer, a lamp, a tobacco jar, a stand for umbrellas or walking sticks are all recognizable” (126).<sup>19</sup> This “familiarity” is located in Bilbo’s household objects. Bilbo’s home is thus presented as a late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century British home, one which would be familiar to the contemporary reader of *The Hobbit*.

It is clear from this that Bag End, and by extension Bilbo, appears to be inhabiting a completely different material culture from the world of Middle-earth as it exists outside the Shire. Not only are the hobbits English, but they are relatively *modern* English. Other aspects of hobbit culture are also clearly anachronistic; as Adam Roberts points out, the fact that Bilbo has pockets at all should be as much of a puzzle to Gollum as the question of what is inside them (100). For Shippey:

Bilbo’s behaviour is solidly anachronistic, for he is wearing a jacket, relying on a written contract, drawing a careful distinction between gain and profit [...] Where Bard and Thorin use archaic words (“Hail!,” “foes,” “hoard,” “kindred,” “slain”) he uses modern ones [...] no character from epic or saga could even begin to think like Bilbo. (66)

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<sup>19</sup> This long list of household objects calls to mind Cohen’s statement that the Victorian home is associated with “clutter [...] as the century wore on, rooms became ever more crowded with possessions in a bewildering variety of styles” (34). Though Bag End appears to be a huge house, the sense of clutter is nonetheless invoked by frequent mentions of furniture and by the crowding-in of the dwarves in the first chapter.

Furthermore, the text itself uses anachronistic language in relation to Bilbo. Bilbo's shriek of fear is described as being "like the whistle of an engine coming out of a tunnel" (47). According to Douglas A. Anderson, Tolkien considered replacing this metaphor with one more in keeping with Middle-earth's material culture in the 1966 edition, but eventually chose not to. For Anderson, this anachronism can be explained away by the fact that Tolkien is narrating the story in the 1930s (*Hobbit* 47–48 n35). Yet it is important to note that this language is exclusively associated with the hobbits.

Adam Roberts suggests that one of the functions performed by the anachronistic hobbits is to mediate between the perspectives of the modern reader and "the pitiless Northern-European Folk Tale world" (95).<sup>20</sup> Shippey too suggests that Bilbo is a more accessible hero who, though bourgeois (and therefore more familiar to the reader), feels enough sympathy for the values of this ancient world that he can traverse it, and further, that this strategy is also an attempt "to enforce a plea for tolerance across an enormous gap of times and attitudes and ethical styles" (66). Neither of these explanations, however, fully accounts for the place that the hobbits occupy within Middle-earth.

Esty describes the "Anglocentric and anthropological turn among intellectuals bent on remaking England into a knowable community" (165) in the wake of empire—essentially turning imperial ways of knowing upon domestic landscape and history. The hobbits occupy a strange place within this system of representation. Reading *The Lord of the Rings* as a text that "hinges upon viewing" (909), Jes Battis remarks how often the hobbits in that novel are able to elude the gaze of the more powerful actors—most significantly that of Sauron, who appears in the text as a monstrous eye, but also the gazes of men, elves and ents, whose understanding of the world has no space within it for hobbits. In a world where "Elves made all the old words," they are "the only self-named people in all of Middle-earth" (912). It is precisely their invisibility under these existing systems of knowledge, suggests Battis, that allows the hobbits to succeed in defeating Sauron.

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<sup>20</sup> C. Butler further notes that in many cases the same concepts are given different names in *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, possibly to render the first more comprehensible to its younger audience ("Worldbuilding" 113).



If, as Battis suggests, *The Lord of the Rings* is full of powerful actors who “seek to contain the hobbits within a system of surveillance,” *The Hobbit* is even more preoccupied with Bilbo’s strategies of avoiding such a system. Early in the book we are told that hobbits “can move quietly in woods, absolutely quietly. They take a pride in it” (70), and that it is this quality of being able to pass unseen that makes Bilbo an appropriate choice for a burglar. Bilbo’s status as something outside known systems of understanding saves him first from the trolls, who do not know what he is, and then from Smaug, who “did not tell Bilbo that there was one smell he could not make out at all, hobbit-smell; it was quite outside his experience and puzzled him mightily” (280). And of course the central incident in the book is Bilbo’s acquisition of the ring, which makes him literally invisible. At the end of the book, Bilbo even has to struggle to prove that he still exists, as he has been declared dead in his absence (360–361). If, as Tiffin and Lawson describe it, colonialism is an “operation of discourse [which] interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation”, the hobbits are somehow located outside this system. As Battis notes, they “have no discernible place within the social text of Middle-earth” (909).

Tolkien gave as the etymology for “hobbit” the Old English “hol-bytla” (hole-builder or hole-dweller) and vehemently rejected the similarities which were often made between the word and “rabbit” (Shippey 52). However, it is a similarity of which several of the characters in *The Hobbit* seem to be aware. Bilbo is compared to a rabbit at multiple points in the text; by the trolls, by Beorn, by the narrator, and at one point even by Bilbo himself. Shippey notes that there is no Old English or Old Norse word for “rabbit”, and the Oxford English Dictionary finds no ultimate etymology for the word. This is because rabbits are an immigrant species to the British Isles, but have been so thoroughly assimilated into the English imagination that few people now realise this (53). Shippey later suggests that this is true of the hobbits as well as of the English themselves, comparing the three “waves” of hobbit immigrants to the Shire (the Stoors, Harfoots and Fallohides, mentioned in the appendices to *The Lord of the Rings*) to the Angles, Saxons and Jutes (77). He finds the “anachronism-cum-familiarity” (78) around the word “rabbit” equally apt for the hobbits themselves. In discussing the etymological and historical links between hobbits and rabbits, he, suggests that either of them may be considered an “asterisk thing”; something which may have existed, but for which we have no material proof (79). The position of the asterisk thing allows the hobbits to exist within the unified system of Middle-earth without being seen—to elude a seemingly totalising gaze while still having a place within this larger world. (Here too a connection may

be made to Tolkien's reasoning, discussed above, for the presentation of "fairies" as diminutive creatures.) Like Tolkien, the hobbits are (to use Esty's phrase) "outsiders-cum-insiders" to Middle-earth—able in some crucial ways to stand outside the action of the text.

Tolkien's disregard for anachronism in relation to the hobbits sits oddly with the concern shown elsewhere in the book for creating a relatively consistent pre-modern culture. Anderson draws attention to Tolkien's changing a mention of "cold chicken and tomatoes" in the 1937 edition of *The Hobbit* to "cold chicken and pickles" in the 1966 version (*The Hobbit*, 41 n26). Tomatoes, he points out, are imports from the "New World" and are neither materially nor linguistically consistent with the wider premodern culture of Middle-earth. The same applies to tobacco. Throughout *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien therefore uses the term "pipeweed" for the substance frequently smoked by the hobbits (though "tobacco" appears at various points in *The Hobbit*). Potatoes, nativised by Sam Gamgee to "taters", also appear in *The Lord of the Rings*. Meanwhile, Bilbo invites Gandalf to tea (*Hobbit* 36) and has a regular tea-time—the hobbits appear to have evolved cultural rituals based on the availability of a plant unavailable to the English until the seventeenth century. The concern, then, is not for a strictly pre-modern material culture as Anderson implies, but for a material culture that appears *English*. Tomatoes, also an immigrant species, have not been assimilated into the English imagination as tea, tobacco and taters have been. It is telling that the prominence of each of these products in the English imagination is a legacy of empire—Tolkien's mythology for "England" cannot so easily extract itself from an imperial identity.

While, as I have explained, Bilbo (in *The Hobbit*) and the other hobbits (in *The Lord of the Rings*) are anachronistic figures within the larger culture of Middle-earth, it is notable that other characters, when they enter into the spaces associated with the hobbits, seem immediately to adapt to their surroundings. The dwarves in the opening chapter of *The Hobbit* seem well acquainted with the (comparatively modern) contents of Bilbo's larders, and are able to do dishes, write contracts and leave notes on the mantelpiece. Such spaces, Bag End in *The Hobbit* and the wider Shire in *The Lord of the Rings*, thus function as links between the past and present. It is here that we see the "timeless, rural England" described by Esty, "calqued" onto the homes of the hobbits.

In the previous chapter I discussed the peculiar atemporality of particular heterotopias, which are “[themselves] outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages” (26). In *The Hobbit*, Bag End becomes such a space—a Victorian home from which an ancient past can be accessed. I have already mentioned Tolkien’s own illustration of the entrance hall of Bag End, placed at the end of the book. At the centre of that picture is the round door which opens onto a road (the road that, according to Bilbo’s own songs, “goes ever on”). This illustration thus reinforces the “there” and “back again” of the book’s title—the door to Bilbo’s home becomes the portal between the familiar, domestic nineteenth- or early-twentieth-century setting and the “other” space of adventure. The following chapter will discuss in more detail the concept of the “portal fantasy”.

## Chapter 4. Empire and England: C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia

In an 1894 essay titled “Elephant Smashing and Lion Shooting” H. Rider Haggard asks where “the romance writers of future generations [will] find a safe and secret place, unknown to the pestilent accuracy of the geographer, in which to lay their plots” (quoted in Brantlinger, 194). Haggard's question, posed at a high point of British imperial power, renders the writing of “romance” in wholly spatial terms. In the previous two chapters, I have discussed the effects of both the lack of new territories into which to expand the British Empire, and the impending loss of old ones, on the children's adventure books of the 1930s and '40s. Both Arthur Ransome and J.R.R. Tolkien set their works in different types of fantastical landscapes: Ransome's characters use their surroundings as the foundation for imagined settings based on their reading of adventure fiction, while Tolkien creates an entire secondary world. In doing so, both writers offer partial solutions to the problem set out by Haggard. In C.S. Lewis's series of portal fantasies, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, as this chapter will show, the secondary world becomes the “safe and secret place” invoked by Haggard. At the same time, Lewis's secondary world becomes a space for negotiating national identity as well.

If the 1930s context in which Tolkien and Ransome were writing had presaged imperial decline, by the 1950s the prospective loss of empire had become a tangible reality. Britain was still suffering the effects of the Second World War, and had already seen the loss of major colonies, particularly India. At this point, the dissolution of the empire seemed inevitable; a contemporary account, John Strachey's *The End of Empire* (1959), states that its purpose is to “consider Britain's relationship with the world *now that her empire is being dissolved*” (7, my emphasis). Though Britain would continue to hold overseas territories for decades after, the end of empire could now be widely accepted as fact. It is in this context that I read the seven books that make up C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, published between 1950 and 1956. In them, a series of British schoolchildren (the four Pevensie siblings, as well as Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke, Eustace Scrubb, and Jill Pole) visit the fantasy world of Narnia at various important moments in its history, including its creation and its ending. As I will demonstrate, the construction of the secondary world in the series reveals a number of contradictory impulses around the end of empire, showing on the one hand a distrust of imperialism and on the other a nostalgia for it, with the land of Narnia at

various points figuring as both a desirable other and an idealised self-image of England. My analysis of the series is divided into two sections, which discuss the presentation of Narnia as “imperial” and “domestic” space respectively. Caught between these competing and inextricable impulses within nationalist discourse, the presentation of Narnia is seen to “[waver] between vocabularies” (Bhabha, “Introduction” 2) making it an unstable and inconsistent space.

#### **4.1 The Magician’s Map**

The previous chapter discusses in some detail the construction of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth as a form of secondary world—a (relatively) internally consistent space separate from the “real” world of the reader, and governed by different laws. For Edward James, Tolkien and C.S. Lewis “stand together at the origins of modern fantasy, mediating the fantasies of earlier generations and both, in their own very different ways, helping to give modern fantasy its medievalist cast” (63). In particular, he sees these writers, particularly Tolkien, as having normalised the idea of the secondary world. He writes, “After 1955 [which year marked the publication of the final volume of *The Lord of the Rings*] fantasy writers no longer had to explain away their worlds by framing them as dreams, or traveller’s tales, or by providing them with any fictional link to our world at all” (65). Earlier writers, then, had sought to justify their fantastic secondary worlds by situating them within the confines of the real; it is only after the popular success of these two writers that the secondary world becomes a completely separate alternate space, untouched by Haggard’s pestilent geographer, in which the action of the narrative can be played out. In effect, I will show, the secondary world takes on the functions of the colonised territory of nineteenth-century adventure fiction, while no longer confined to the limits of the real.

This link between the secondary world and the colonised territory is strengthened by the fact that, throughout Lewis's series, the reader is constantly made aware of Narnia’s status as a colonisable space. To varying degrees, six of the seven books that make up the Chronicles of Narnia can be described as presenting a narrative of anti-colonial struggle. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the first book in the series to be published, the arrival of the British children in Narnia marks the end of the tyrannical rule of the White Witch who has seized political power and imposed a century of winter upon the land and

people. In *Prince Caspian* (1951), we learn that Narnia has been conquered by an invading force some generations previously and is now a settler colony, and the children are tasked with the removal of a usurper king and the restoration of power to the indigenous Narnians. Both *The Horse and his Boy* (1954) and *The Silver Chair* (1953) revolve around plots to conquer Narnia, which are foiled by the intervention of the child protagonists. *The Last Battle* (1956) is in part a story about the successful conquest of Narnia by the neighbouring country of Calormen. In *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), both Jadis and Andrew Ketterley are failed colonists who wish to exploit the new world of Narnia. Though *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) also contains at least one instance of a struggle between coloniser and colonised, this book is something of an exception, as I will show.

What is more, in several instances across the series, Lewis makes direct reference to European colonial history. In the first of the books (according to the series' internal chronology), *The Magician's Nephew*, the unpleasant Andrew Ketterley enters the fertile new world of Narnia and immediately begins to calculate the ways in which its resources may be exploited.<sup>1</sup> He exults, "I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded" (103). Uncle Andrew's entry into Narnia recalls a similar incident in Lewis's earlier science-fiction novel, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), in which a scientist and a businessman travel to the planet Mars, which is in Lewis's telling a planet inhabited by three separate sentient indigenous species. Devine, the businessman, is interested primarily in the planet as he sees an opportunity to drain its mineral resources; Weston, the scientist, plans to exterminate its current inhabitants to provide more living space for humans—both recognisable aims in colonial history. Both men only seek to exploit the planet, and neither is able to see its sentient inhabitants as equals. Lewis further parodies imperial encounters when he has Weston attempt to address the natives, offering them "pretty pretty!" beads and speaking to them in a broken version of the language.<sup>2</sup> As the narrator explains, "[Weston] knew that he was following the most orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> The order in which the books were published does not entirely match the order in which the events described by them ostensibly take place. *The Magician's Nephew* was the sixth book to be published, but describes the creation of Narnia, while *The Horse and His Boy*, the fifth book, takes place entirely during the years covered by the final chapters of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Where relevant in this chapter, I have specified whether the discussion refers to the internal chronology or order of publication of the books.

<sup>2</sup> Within the text, Weston's broken "English" may be explained as a representation of his unfamiliarity with the Martian language (we are led to assume that the text we read is a translation from Martian of Weston's words),

rules for frightening and then conciliating primitive races; and he was not the man to be deterred by one or two failures” (127); Weston has thus been trained in this mode of colonial encounter by his nation's imperial history on Earth. In both *The Magician's Nephew* and *Out of the Silent Planet*, then, we see a blatant criticism of the exploitative nature of colonialism, and specifically British colonialism. Other figures in the series are also negatively associated with the processes of empire. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, while under the influence of the evil White Witch and fantasising about ruling the country, Edmund Pevensie reflects on Narnia's lack of development:

[Edmund] happened to say to himself, “When I'm King of Narnia the first thing I shall do will be to make some decent roads.” And of course that set him off thinking about being a King and all the other things he would do and this cheered him up a good deal. He had just settled in his mind what sort of palace he would have and how many cars and all about his private cinema and where the principal railways would run and what laws he would make against beavers and dams. (84)

The reference here to the railways in particular seems a direct allusion to a specifically British form of colonial rule, so that Edmund and the White Witch are both by implication aligned with the British Empire. Another character to be thus indirectly associated with empire is *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader's* Eustace Scrubb, who spends a great deal of his early time in Narnia demanding to be taken to the British Consul, and is seemingly unable to believe that he has entered a space beyond British political power—once he has reformed, the references to Britain and British power cease (and in *The Silver Chair* he begs to be allowed to escape Britain for Narnia).<sup>3</sup> Nicole DuPlessis believes that in these early scenes, “Eustace's enjoyment of bullying those over whom he has an advantage also suggests Lewis's antipathy toward colonialism” (118), a reading which is supplemented by Sandford Schwartz, who quotes Lewis as having claimed that he “hated whatever I knew or imagined of the British Empire” (167). DuPlessis points out that Lewis, coming from an Irish family, was familiar with postcolonial politics in that context and further, according to John Bresland's biography of the author, that Lewis was a supporter of Home Rule at an early age. Lewis's Irish background is popularly believed to have played a role in inspiring the Narnian

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yet to the reader the result is clearly a parody of an accepted form of speech associated with communicating with primitive natives.

<sup>3</sup> Significantly, both Edmund and Eustace couch their colonial ambitions in the language of progress and development, unlike Ketterley, who speaks openly of exploitation.

landscape.<sup>4</sup> David Clare suggests that the children's trips to Narnia bear parallels with Lewis's own trips home to Ireland as a homesick schoolboy who had to spend much of the year in an English boarding school (26–27). Pointing out a passing reference to “a room all hung with green, with a harp in one corner” (11) in Professor Kirke's house in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, DuPlessis suggests that Ireland was very much on the author's mind at the time of writing the book. However, while DuPlessis reads the Narnia books as being specifically anti-colonial, contrasting their numerous negative portrayals of exploitative imperial rules with the benign stewardship of a series of human monarchs, this reading is very incomplete. Writing from an ecocritical perspective, DuPlessis lauds the stewardship over the natural world which the books present as a benign alternative to the violent colonial subjugation practised by rulers like the White Witch. Read from a postcolonial perspective, however, this stewardship is far from benign. Rather than simply denouncing colonial rule, a closer reading of the books reveals a much more complex relationship with the idea of empire than DuPlessis' argument suggests. The secondary world itself, as I have already discussed, takes on several of the functions of colonised space; a dynamic which places the human children from “our” world, as well as the reader of the books, in the position of the coloniser. As I will show in the section that follows, it is precisely through the benign stewardship lauded by DuPlessis that the Chronicles of Narnia both assert and deny imperial control over the secondary world space.

In *Prince Caspian*, writing a formal letter to the usurper King Miraz, Peter Pevensie styles himself as “Peter, by the gift of Aslan, by election, by prescription, and by conquest, High King over all Kings in Narnia, Emperor of the Lone Islands and Lord of Cair Paravel, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Lion” (151). Though the words “conquest” and “emperor” both feature here, there is little in the books to suggest that he, or any other Narnian king, has acquired land by any such imperial means. In fact, the Narnia books seem to go out of their way to deny a history of conquest. In both *The Magician's Nephew* and *The*

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<sup>4</sup> Particularly in the period before and immediately after the release of a Disney adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in 2005, the tourism industry in Northern Ireland made much of this ostensible connection between the local landscape and that of Narnia. In an article in *The Observer*, Fiona Campbell claims that “The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has produced a lustrous, full-colour booklet detailing Lewis's local links. Harper Taxi Tours, which usually takes tourists round the Shankill and Falls Roads to see the murals and sites of Belfast's political history, has branched out into a more magical subject area and created a CS Lewis tour. Queen's University is dedicating a reading room, and there is even a CS Lewis Festival that started on Friday and runs until 11 December” (Campbell, “If you didn't find Narnia in your own wardrobe ...”).



*Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the human characters are entrusted with the rule of Narnia by Aslan; since they are the only human characters in the books at the time; the books take for granted the natural rulership of humans over other sentient creatures, so that, their rule is uncontested. In *Prince Caspian*, we learn that even their non-human subjects share this belief in the right of humans to rule—Trufflehunter the Badger claims that “Narnia was never right except when a son of Adam was King,” and that it is “not Men's country [...] but it's a country for a man to be King of” (64–65). Thus, at no point do we see the virtuous human rulers attempting to conquer or subjugate the land or its people, because within the terms of the world created by Lewis, power is already theirs.

*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in which King Caspian and his companions set out to discover new lands to the East of Narnia, provides some further examples of governance that is not sought out but bestowed. The ship first travels to the Lone Islands, whose history as a colony of Narnia is at this point in the books unclear. What *is* made clear to the reader is that the Narnians did not conquer them (though Caspian later suggests the necessity of “re-conquering” the islands):

“I've never understood why they belong to Narnia,” said Caspian. “Did Peter the High King conquer them?”

“Oh no,” said Edmund. “They were Narnian before our time—in the days of the White Witch” (32)

There has, we learn, been no contact between Narnia and this colony for a century and a half. Deprived of Narnia's influence over this period, the Lone Islands have fallen into the hands of petty, corrupt bureaucrats who have allowed the slave trade to flourish. Caspian's actions (ending the slave trade, threatening to bankrupt the islands by demanding over a century's worth of tribute from the governor, deposing the current governor and setting up a replacement) seem reasonable in this context, and he is framed by the text as a liberator rather than a despot. While the characters and even the narrator of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* disclaim any knowledge of the circumstances in which the Lone Islands became a Narnian territory, a later book offers a brief explanation. In *The Last Battle* we learn “[how] King Gale, who was ninth in descent from Frank the first of all Kings, had sailed far away into the Eastern seas and delivered the Lone Islanders from a dragon and how, in return, they had given him the Lone Islands to be part of the royal lands of Narnia for ever” (85). Here, as in

the incident in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the text positions the Narnian ruler as a benefactor rather than a conqueror and constructs the transfer of power over the land as something freely offered and accepted, absolving Narnia and its rulers of any imperialist designs. Yet despite the books' insistence that these transfers of power and territory be read as non-coercive, the language of imperial rule haunts the text. As I have already noted, Narnian rulers style themselves as "Emperors," and speak of "conquest," while Caspian, tellingly, still imagines "*re-conquering*" the Lone Islands.

The central episode in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* has the Narnians come across an inhabited island where a powerful magician overlord, Coriakin, has altered the physical bodies of his subjects (making them monopodal so that they are unable to walk as they used to) in a fit of rage. These subjects, referred to at first as "the Duffers," ask the Narnians and the British children for help in removing the spells that have been laid upon them. The situation recalls that of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which the children arrived in Narnia to discover another ruler who enacted violent transformation upon the bodies of her subjects (the White Witch was fond of turning the Narnians into stone), and whose subjects required help to be freed. However, we soon learn that Coriakin has been appointed by Aslan himself to rule these subjects, that he has been appointed steward of this island as a punishment for former misdeeds, and that he rules by force out of necessity rather than cruelty:

"Do you grow weary, Coriakin, of ruling such foolish subjects as I have given you here?"

"No," said the Magician, "they are very stupid but there is no real harm in them. I begin to grow rather fond of the creatures. Sometimes, perhaps, I am a little impatient, waiting for the day when they can be governed by wisdom instead of this rough magic." (124)

We also discover the reason for Coriakin's spell upon them:

"Well, they wouldn't do what they were told. Their work is to mind the garden and raise food—not for me, as they imagine, but for themselves. They wouldn't do it at all if I didn't make them. And of course for a garden you want water. There is a beautiful spring about half a mile away up the hill. And from that spring there flows a stream

which comes right past the garden. All I asked them to do was to take their water from the stream instead of trudging up to the spring with their buckets two or three times a day and tiring themselves out besides spilling half of it on the way back. But they wouldn't see it. In the end they refused point blank.”

“Are they as stupid as all that?” asked Lucy.

The Magician sighed. “You wouldn't believe the troubles I've had with them.” (127)

The effect of the above quotations is to suggest, first of all, that the “Duffers” are incapable of ruling themselves, as they are unable to understand what is good for them. The use of corporal punishment to control them is framed as necessary, and is resorted to reluctantly by the person applying it. We are reminded, too, that Coriakin is a reluctant ruler, forced to do his duty. In emphasising that the Duffers do not produce food for him, the text also insists that Coriakin does not gain in any way by his rule; the work that the Duffers do is only for their own benefit. If we, alongside the text and the characters, accept that the Duffers genuinely are unable to govern themselves, it is possible to read his role on the island as that of a benevolent steward. (It is harder to explain Coriakin's choice to alter the bodies of the Duffers magically so that they take on a ridiculous shape that amuses him). It is Coriakin who is depicted as the sufferer here, tasked with a version of Kipling's White Man's Burden; the Duffers, on the other hand, are seen to benefit from his protection.

Significant here is the idea that there will come a time when the Duffers no longer need to be governed by “this rough magic”. Relevant here is Dipesh Chakrabarty's description of the “historicism” that was used in the nineteenth century in particular to justify continued colonial rule of non-European peoples. According to this logic, perpetuated even by liberal thinkers like J.S. Mill, “Indians or Africans were not yet civilized enough to rule themselves. Some historical time of development and civilization (colonial rule and education, to be precise) had to elapse before they could be considered prepared for such a task” (8). This argument was closely related to the notion of “trusteeship” in Britain's relationship with its colonies. Richard Whiting describes this notion, widespread in Britain from the beginning of the twentieth century and through the period of decolonisation, as the result of a “liberal approach to empire” which argued that “imperial subjects should henceforth regard their self-determination as an entirely legitimate goal which British

governments would welcome rather than resist” (164).<sup>5</sup> But this position left scope for this self-determination to be constantly deferred, and assumed that, as the colonies evolved towards self-determination, their political character would converge with that of the imperial power. In practice, as Whiting shows, the notion that the imperial power owed a “responsibility” towards the colonies was invoked to delay the granting of independence. He writes,

During the prelude to Indian independence, Sudhir Ghosh, Gandhi’s emissary, commented that “The real obstacle in the way is this extraordinary sense of moral responsibility which our British friends feel for everyone else”. “Responsibility” assumed that power was there to be exercised as a duty, with discrimination and judgement, so that the course of events might be influenced and manipulated. (165)

A similar dynamic appears to be at work in Coriakin’s rule of the Duffers. They are portrayed as incapable of recognising what will benefit them, and therefore unfit to rule themselves (even though they seem in fact to be largely self-governing, and have elected their own leader). Coriakin thus takes on the position of a colonial governor whose job is to guide them until they are capable of complete self-governance—and his imposition of rules to train them to go about their tasks logically are a form of this guidance. We are not told how long the colonial uplift of the Duffers is to take: Whiting quotes Lord Irwin, a Viceroy of India, suggesting that his Secretary of State “‘had a rough timescale of 600 years in mind’ when India would be ready for self-government” (165).

The doctrine of trusteeship described above was only one aspect of the “liberal approach to empire” described by Whiting. In her discussion of eighteenth century travel literature, Mary Louise Pratt describes a form of writing she describes as the “anti-conquest”. She sees the eighteenth century systematising of nature as the beginning of

a new kind of Eurocentred planetary consciousness [which] asserted an urban, lettered, male authority over the whole of the planet [...] At the same time, in and of itself, the system of nature as a descriptive paradigm was an utterly benign and abstract appropriation of the planet. Claiming no transformative potential whatsoever,

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<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed history of the development of the doctrine of trusteeship in British imperial history, see Camilla Boisen, “The Changing Moral Justification of Empire: From the Right to Colonise to the Obligation to Civilise”. *History of European Ideas* 39.3 (2013): 335–353.

it differed sharply from overtly imperial articulations of conquest, conversion, territorial appropriation, and enslavement. The system created, as I suggested above, a Utopian, innocent version of European global authority, which I refer to as “anti-conquest”. (38–39)

This authority was “innocent”, Pratt suggests, because natural history is “not transformative in the least. That is, as it understands itself, it undertakes to do virtually nothing in or to the world” (33). Commercial interests in the empire were compared unfavourably to the supposed disinterestedness of the naturalist or scientist, though in practice the two often worked together. In my earlier chapter on Arthur Ransome’s *Swallows and Amazons* series, I discuss the ways in which Dick Callum’s desire for knowledge is revealed to be far from benign in its effects. Here, Pratt’s formulation offers a useful model for a reading of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. The benign rule of the various human monarchs (King Frank, the Pevensies, Caspian, Tirian) is contrasted with that of the colonisers who wish to impose traumatic change upon the land. A strong thread of conservationism runs through the series. The evil of the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is depicted through her action of creating endless winter, thus interrupting the cycle of the seasons (the book gives no particular reason for her doing this).<sup>6</sup> Deforestation is also a running theme of the books. In *Prince Caspian* the conquering race of the Telmarines are hated by the trees because they have cut so many down. The trees themselves, once animated by the presence of tree spirits, have become dormant. In the final book, *The Last Battle*, the chopping down of trees for timber by the invading Calormene army is the violation that triggers the whole of the plot.

Yet this conservationist focus is somewhat complicated by the nature of the indigenous inhabitants of this fantasy world. Narnia’s citizens include talking animals, personifications of nature (dryads, hamadryads, naiads), and mythical creatures that are part-human, such as dwarfs and centaurs. All of these creatures are linked with nature and the natural world. Though they are anthropomorphised, DuPlessis argues, “their status as part of nature is not compromised by their having human and nonhuman characteristics” (117).

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<sup>6</sup> In *Prince Caspian* we are informed that the White Witch also “stamped out the Beavers”. Readers of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* know this statement to be incorrect (Mr and Mrs Beaver are major characters in that book), but it suggests the possibility that some species were brought close to extinction during her regime (and Lewis may be making a reference to the fact that the Eurasian beaver was hunted to near-extinction by the beginning of the twentieth century). The implication in any case is that the White Witch had a destructive effect upon the Narnian ecosystem.

However, the opposite is not true—their human characteristics *are* compromised by the fact of their being embedded in the natural world. In fact, Narnian culture and history are entirely subsumed into nature. Plans to change the landscape of Narnia for purposes of development are treated by the text as inherently suspicious: Edmund under the influence of the White Witch or Eustace under the influence of socialist and vegetarian parents may suggest such innovations as modern transport systems, but once reformed by the text they see the value of keeping Narnia as it is. In *Prince Caspian*, one of the first signs of Narnia’s freedom from Telmarine rule is the collapsing of Beruna’s Bridge, which the River God describes as “my chains” (169). The only instance of an artificially-built object which is depicted positively by the text is the dam created by Mr Beaver in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—a form of construction which can be safely relegated to the natural world.<sup>7</sup> In *The Last Battle*, the evil ape Shift describes a future in which “There’ll be oranges and bananas pouring in—and roads and big cities and schools and offices and whips and muzzles and saddles and cages and kennels and prisons—Oh, everything” (34). That the text chooses to associate the earlier items on this list with the later ones is telling, as is an exchange in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in which the corrupt governor Gumpas justifies his support of the slave trade thus: “‘Have you no idea of progress, of development?’ ‘I have seen them both in an egg,’ said Caspian. ‘We call it “Going Bad” in Narnia’” (49). In both of these cases, progress is linked to terrible results (slavery, incarceration, and corporal punishment), so that the only alternative to evil is cultural stagnation. And indeed, Narnia seems remarkably static. Due to the difference in time between “our” world and Narnia, the children’s visits to that world take place across thousands of years, from the dawn of the world to its end, and yet Narnia’s material culture remains entirely constant. The dwarfs in *The Magician’s Nephew*, for example, are born with the ability to do metal and woodwork, but they don’t seem to progress noticeably in this skill in the centuries that follow. An important consequence of this is that the children are able constantly to return to the country and find it immediately accessible. When the Pevensie children return to Narnia after (from the perspective of the Narnians) several centuries in *Prince Caspian*, they find that while even the landscape has altered over this time, all other aspects of this world are either identical to, or even slightly more primitive than those of the country they left. At no point are they forced to relearn the culture of the

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<sup>7</sup> The books do, however, feature several older structures, particularly castles, whose presence in the landscape appears to be legitimised by age, and by association with such institutions as monarchy (the castle of Cair Paravel) and religion (Aslan’s How). In *Prince Caspian*, the castle of King Miraz is dismissed as “a thing of yesterday. Your great-great-grandfather built it” (52).

secondary world or even reassess their own place within its hierarchy. The effect of the books' rejection of progress is thus to render the secondary world completely available to the children. This has several implications, which I discuss below.

Narnia's cultural and historical accessibility is an important aspect of the genre in which the books are written. Farah Mendlesohn classifies Lewis's books as examples of the "portal" or "portal-quest" fantasy—indeed, she describes Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as "the classic portal fantasy" (*Rhetorics* xix). She suggests that both portal fantasies and quest fantasies can be linked together, as both follow the same narrative structure: "a character leaves her familiar surroundings and passes through a portal into an unknown place".<sup>8</sup> Mendlesohn's linking together of these two genres also suggests a further link between the portal fantasy and the adventure novel. The function of the portal is to take the protagonist out of familiar settings into spaces that are unknown—usually to the reader as well as the protagonist. As a consequence of this, the reader is positioned as the "companion-audience, tied to the protagonist and dependent on the protagonist for exploration and decoding" (1). The form of the portal-quest thus does not lend itself to the questioning of the received narrative. Fantasyland (Mendlesohn's term for the fantastic heterotopias in which the action of these books takes place) is constructed

[...] through the insistence on a received truth. This received truth is embodied in didacticism and elaboration. While much information about the world is culled from what the protagonist can see (with a consequent denial of polysemic interpretation), history or analysis is often provided by the storyteller who is drawn in the role of sage, magician, or guide. While this casting apparently opens up the text, in fact it seeks to close it down further by denying not only reader interpretation, but also that of the hero/protagonist. (7)

In line with this formulation, throughout the series we are presented with characters whose function is to educate the human characters about the unfamiliar space that they have entered, and whose authority is in the main unquestioned; Doctor Cornelius and Trumpkin the dwarf in *Prince Caspian*, Lord Bern in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and Glimfeather the Owl

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<sup>8</sup> As I note in the previous chapter, Mendlesohn suggests that Tolkien's works may also be read as portal-quest fantasies, since for the Hobbits, the world outside the Shire is significantly different to the world which they know. However, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* are both set entirely in the secondary world, whereas the Narnia books feature travel between separate worlds.

in *The Silver Chair* all serve to provide the protagonists with “an impromptu civics class” (*Rhetorics* 13). *The Last Battle* and *The Horse and His Boy* follow a slightly different structure since both begin in the secondary world (and the early scenes of *The Last Battle* in particular take place in a Narnia from which the children from “our” world are entirely absent). However, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* provides several clear examples of the phenomenon, with a progression of characters instructing the children about the world of Narnia. As the Pevensies enter Narnia, they receive different accounts of this new space and its functioning. Lucy meets the faun Mr Tumnus, who tells her stories of Narnian life before explaining that the whole country is ruled by the White Witch, who has caused an eternal winter and has ordered that any human child be captured and handed over to her. Edmund meets the Witch herself, and is told that she wishes to adopt a child to be her heir. She also informs him that fauns are notorious liars; and in fact Tumnus has already admitted to lying to Lucy in order to lure her to his house. Yet despite the presence of these two competing narratives, the reader is not allowed to remain in doubt over which is the truth; an intrusive narratorial voice informs us that the Witch is deceiving Edmund (“for she knew, though Edmund did not, that this was enchanted Turkish Delight and that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves” [38]), as well as that her dwarf attendant is also an unpleasant character (“The dwarf immediately took this and handed it to Edmund with a bow and a smile; not a very nice smile” [36]). Shortly after this, when the two children return home, Edmund lies to his siblings about these events, further rendering his judgement unreliable to the reader. Finally, though the older Pevensie children briefly believe Edmund’s version of events (which is more plausible, despite Lucy’s being “the more truthful” [47]), the intervention of the authoritative Professor Kirke reinforces Lucy’s plausibility, and therefore that of Tumnus. Thus at multiple levels we are denied a polysemic interpretation of the situation in Narnia.

As we progress through the books, the possibility of interpretation is progressively denied in other ways as well. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian* both feature early sections in which the protagonists find themselves set adrift in Narnia and have to make decisions regarding their own actions. By contrast, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the quest for the seven lost lords is explained to Lucy, Edmund, and Eustace as soon as they have arrived on the ship. By *The Silver Chair* (1953), Aslan is present at the



characters' arrival into the fantasy world; Jill and Eustace, the protagonists of that book, are informed of the purpose for which they have been transported into Narnia, and are even provided with directions and a step-by-step guide to completing the quest—all that is left for the children to do is to attempt (not entirely successfully) to look for the “signs” that Aslan has already enumerated. The signs here function in the same manner as a treasure map—they require the characters to find particular landmarks and to solve the Narnian landscape, rather than immersing themselves in the space. Twice, when the characters deviate from the path set out by the “signs”, they find themselves in danger of failing in their quest.

Mendlesohn further notes that the nature of the portal-quest, depending as it does on moving *through* the territory, requires the protagonist and the reader to make instant judgements about the people and places she passes, rather than acquiring a multi-faceted understanding of them. This “rhetoric that posits insight in terms of visual perception” (*Rhetorics* 12) leads to an overdependence on such sources of information as physiognomy. This is particularly clear in books which feature a number of different fantasy “races”, where all members of a particular group share a particular characteristic. In the Narnia books, we are told more than once that giants are not very bright, that centaurs are solemn and noble, that squirrels are talkative, that dwarfs are cynical, while entire races of creatures like ogres are inherently evil. In *Prince Caspian*, a distinction is even made between the characters of “red” and “black” dwarfs. One consequence of this is to turn sentient beings into classifiable species, effecting a “standardizing of persons” (Pratt 36), which has had several sinister historical implications. Another is, Mendlesohn adds, to “fix” a character or setting, “embedding an assumption of unchangingness on the part of the indigenes. This kind of fantasy is essentially imperialist: only the hero is capable of change; fantasyland is orientalized into the ‘unchanging past’” (*Rhetorics* 9). The fantasy space is thus inherently accessible, knowable, and mappable for the protagonist, and by extension, the reader. Mendlesohn describes these features of the genre as mere consequences of the structure of these stories, yet the result is to parallel what Elleke Boehmer has described as the aim of the coloniser—“to impose a monopoly on discourse” (Boehmer 53).

In other words, the imposition of unchangingness upon the fantasy landscape as described by Mendlesohn has clear parallels with the treatment of imperial space in colonial

narrative. F.G. Hutchins has noted that imperial attitudes towards the colonies shifted over time. India, for example, had been at the mercy of “European marauders and traders” (viii) until the end of the eighteenth century, and for much of the nineteenth century was the focus of reformers who “looked forward to a complete transformation of Indian life on an English model” (the Edmund of the early sections of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* would find this a reasonable desire). But by the end of the nineteenth century, India had become the focus for men “disturbed by the growing democratization of English life” who wished to preserve its hierarchies. “Once the target of reformers, India had now become the hope of reactionaries” (Hutchins xi). David Cannadine suggests that the idea of India, for the British, “became increasingly about [the ‘analogues of hierarchy’] in the second half of the nineteenth century [so that] ‘Traditional’, ‘timeless’ and ‘unchanging’ South Asia now became an object to cherish rather than to criticize” (41). For both of these historians, India’s importance to the British imagination is the result of a preoccupation with class; if social hierarchies in Britain are collapsing, India provides a space which can be protected so that an enduring (and unchanging) social order can flourish there. The colony thus becomes a heterotopic space, which provides a partial solution to anxieties about class within the metropole.

A preoccupation with hierarchy is visible throughout the *Chronicles of Narnia*. As I have already demonstrated, humans are considered to be the only legitimate rulers of the country—in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch’s authority is challenged on the grounds that she is descended from Lilith rather than Eve (a human, in the books’ parlance is a “Son of Adam” or “Daughter of Eve”). Even Aslan has his place in this hierarchy; as the “son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea” he will not “work against the Emperor’s magic” (LWW 129).<sup>9</sup> This particular ordering is clearly a result of Lewis’s own spiritual beliefs (the books are also Christian allegories, with Aslan figuring as the Jesus figure), but in the wider context of empire, a hierarchy which positions the European characters as the natural rulers of this world has larger implications as well. This unquestioned ordering of rulers and ruled is particularly striking in the case of *Prince Caspian*, a novel which dramatises an anticolonial struggle and its aftermath. The indigenous “old Narnians” choose Caspian, a new human ruler, even though he is a member of the

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<sup>9</sup> A clearly ordered social hierarchy, in this case at a cosmic level, is also one of the major concerns of *Out of the Silent Planet*. One character explains, “‘There must be rule, yet how can creatures rule themselves? Beasts must be ruled by *hnau* and *hnau* by *eldila* and *eldila* by Maleldil’” (102).

invading race of Telmarines, before joining battle against their oppressors, while the badger Trufflehunter insists that “Narnia was never right except when a son of Adam was king” (64). Though the novel offers a relatively sophisticated resolution, in which many of the Telmarines continue to regard Narnia as their home, it leaves uncontested the idea that a member of the colonising regime is the only possible ruler of the country.

In 1950s Britain, the end of the empire was the cause for a great deal of anxiety around British identity. Linda Colley has shown that the process by which British national identity was constructed in relation to the British Empire had been continuous since the early 1700s (xv), so that a contemporary writer, John Strachey, writing in the 1950s, was able to describe the effects of its loss as traumatic. He claimed,

The morale, the spirit, the mental health, even, of all of us in Britain are deeply involved in the question of the dissolution of our empire. The whole tone of our national life will partly depend on whether we can comprehend the process in the perspective of history [...] a painful and protracted process will be necessary in order to readjust the national psychology to the broad future which is in fact open to the British people. (204–205)

In addition to this, Alan Sinfield suggests that one of the cornerstones of imperialist ideology was the sense that the contributions of Europeans were *needed* in order to civilise the colonies. He writes,

But what if Africans, Asians and Caribbean peoples were competent, did not need Europeans, did not respect their humanism, wanted them to leave? And what if the Europeans were violent, unjust and, further, hypocritical about it? European self-esteem and the superior status of European culture were at stake. (153)

Such events as the Bandung Conference, which took place in 1955 (and was thus contemporaneous with the *Chronicles of Narnia*), and the earlier Bogor and Colombo conferences, saw the coming together of several newly independent Asian and African states, and would only have increased this sense of cultural insecurity. Antoinette Burton has noted that these conferences were received in the Western world with apprehension that such alliances represented an “Afro-Asian solidarity” which would be built upon “shared outrage at the racial violence of European imperialism” (352). Further, as Sinfield suggests above,

empire could no longer be seen as a thing to be uncritically celebrated, even by British writers. While there had always been an intellectual tradition of dissent against empire in Britain, in the wake of the war, and as a result of anti-imperialist activism in the colonies and in Britain, there were a growing number of critics of empire.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, as I show earlier in this chapter, Lewis himself engaged with a tradition of anti-imperial writing, in his *Space Trilogy* as well as in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Priyamvada Gopal notes a tendency, within postimperial discourse, to erase the contributions of colonial subjects to anti-imperial thought, and to centre British domestic criticism of empire. As a result, she notes:

The bringing to an end of both slavery and imperialism, the two intertwined facets of Britain's global empire, are insistently regarded as deriving principally from either the campaigning consciences of white British reformers or as the logical outcome of the liberalising project that empire always was, conquering in order to free. (21)

Such a discourse, while acknowledging a widespread understanding of the exploitative nature of empire, allows Britain to congratulate itself on its liberality in ending slavery and bestowing sovereignty upon colonised peoples—Gopal further notes that the abolition of the slave trade in particular has contributed to a national myth which constructs freedom as a British value (21).<sup>11</sup> Further, unlike the postcolonial political alliances I mention above, it does not disrupt a worldview which retains Britishness and British agency at its centre.

In this context, I return to Pratt's concept of the "anti-conquest" which, she suggests, allows the European subject "to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony" (7). It is easy to read in the *Chronicles of Narnia* this double movement which Pratt suggests; on the one hand, they perform an anti-imperial stance and on the other, they reaffirm the centrality of European subjectivity, in the context of decolonisation and a public discourse both nostalgic for and critical of empire.

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<sup>10</sup> For studies of anti-imperialism within Britain, see Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities* (Duke University Press, 2006); Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India* (Oxford University Press, 2007), among others.

<sup>11</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that the arrival of the Narnians in the Lone Islands in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* should be framed in such a way as to allow Caspian to "end" a slave trade of which the Narnian empire can claim innocence.

This European subjectivity is exemplified in the image of the landscape as it is presented to the observer. Elleke Boehmer observes how often the colonial gaze of the European in colonialist narrative “in writing [...] appears as bird’s-eye description, and is embodied in the high vantage point or knowledgeable position taken up by a writer or traveller as he re-creates a scene” (68). Pratt also describes the recurring figure of the “seeing man”, or “monarch-of-all-I-survey” scene; the European observer is usually situated above the scene he gazes upon, and his “imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (7); I have already discussed the transferral of this trope to the “camping and tramping” genre of children’s books. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* dramatises this scene when Aslan displays to Peter the territory that is soon to be his kingdom:

And Peter with his sword still drawn in his hand went with the Lion to the eastern edge of the hilltop. There a beautiful sight met their eyes. The sun was setting behind their backs. That meant that the whole country below them lay in the evening light—forest and hills and valleys and, winding away like a silver snake, the lower part of the great river. And beyond all this, miles away, was the sea, and beyond the sea the sky, full of clouds which were just turning rose colour with the reflection of the sunset. But just where the land of Narnia met the sea—in fact, at the mouth of the great river—there was something on a little hill, shining. It was shining because it was a castle and of course the sunlight was reflected from all the windows which looked towards Peter and the sunset; but to Peter it looked like a great star resting on the seashore. (118–119)

Peter is in this case literally the monarch of all he surveys. But this is only one of several instances within the series in which the human child characters (and the reader) are invited to assume this “high vantage point” stance, along with its connotations of possession, with respect to the Narnian landscape. In *The Silver Chair*, Jill Pole’s first glimpse of Narnia is also from above. Later in the book, the characters are able to discover one of the signs that point to the whereabouts of the missing Prince Rilian only by observing the territory from above so that it is “down below them, spread out like a map” (104). Even when not gazing at the country from a height, the books seem to have an oddly cartographical conception of Narnia. Mr Tumnus first describes the country to Lucy by invoking its territorial limits, claiming that the space includes “all that lies between the lamp-post and the great castle of Cair Paravel on the eastern sea.” In *The Last Battle*, Jewel the Unicorn tells a number of stories about Narnia’s past, which have an identical effect:

And as he went on, the picture of all those happy years, all the thousands of them, piled up in Jill's mind till it was rather like looking down from a high hill on to a rich, lovely plain full of woods and waters and cornfields, which spread away and away till it got thin and misty from distance. (85–86)

Here, too, we see that the idea of Narnia, in this case of Narnian history, is conceived of by the human visitor as a landscape gazed down upon from above.

This view from above is essentially a cartographical gaze, and yet maps do not play a significant role in the Chronicles of Narnia as they do in the texts discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis. Lewis's books would appear to bear out Mendlesohn's assertion that the map only becomes a staple feature of the portal fantasy genre in the 1970s (*Rhetorics* 14); while some of the Narnia books feature maps drawn by the illustrator Pauline Baynes, they are rarely detailed, and are not central to the texts themselves. In only one instance does a map feature within the text. This occurs in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, when Coriakin presents Caspian with an accurate map of the Eastern Ocean:

He laid two blank sheets of parchment on the table and asked Drinian to give him an exact account of their voyage up to date: and as Drinian spoke, everything he described came out on the parchment in fine clear lines till at last each sheet was a splendid map of the Eastern Ocean, showing Galma, Terebinthia, the Seven Isles, the Lone Islands, Dragon Island, Burnt Island, Deathwater, and the land of the Duffers itself, all exactly the right sizes and in the right positions. They were the first maps ever made of those seas and better than any that have been made since without magic. For on these, though the towns and mountains looked at first just as they would on an ordinary map, when the Magician lent them a magnifying glass you saw that they were perfect little pictures of the real things, so that you could see the very castle and slave market and streets in Narrowhaven, all very clear though very distant, like things seen through the wrong end of a telescope. (133–134)

Coriakin's powers are thus used to create an exact replica of everything the travellers have seen. Portal fantasies often present maps as infallible and in doing so "complete the denial of discourse" (Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* 14); here, due to Coriakin's magic, the map is so authoritative as to collapse the difference between map and territory. It is the ultimate expression of control over the space.

Maria Sachiko Cecire notes that Lewis, in his letters to illustrator Pauline Baynes, requested that Narnia's maps be made to resemble those of the medieval period rather than modern ordnance surveys. As she points out, "the invocation of medieval maps recalls the political divisions and potential for discovery implied in these earlier images of the world [...] Narnia's mapped location announces its cultural centrality as well as its resemblance to legendary medieval England" ("English Exploration" 115). The map, then, derives its authority from the literary and artistic tradition to which it hearkens back, as well as from the perceived (and in this particular case, supernatural) accuracy of the modern map. The map is, however not the only means by which textuality is used to inscribe (or reinscribe) imperial power over space in the novel. The Island of the Voices episode in particular is full of intertextual references. The most prominent of these is a reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, via Coriakin's reference to "this rough magic" by which he rules his subjects. Further, as Cecire notes, the inclusion of monopods in this episode forms a link with the medieval travel narratives drawn on by Lewis ("English Exploration" 118). They are associated in these narratives with India and Ethiopia in particular, and this connection suggests an equivalence between the island of the Duffers and the alterity of Asian and African spaces in premodern traveller's tales. The effect of these references is to place the Island of the Voices in a literary tradition of colonisable spaces.

Elsewhere in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, written language becomes a means of staking control over space in other forms as well. Caspian's assertion of power over the Lone Islands is carried out through the use of legal language, as the Narnians remind the Governor of his contractual obligations. Later, as the characters depart from Dragon island, Caspian "caused to be cut on a smooth cliff facing the bay" an inscription announcing his discovery of the island (88). Thus Caspian claims ownership of the island by physically inscribing the fact into its surface. At other points in the series, too, text, and particularly text inscribed on the landscape, becomes the locus of power. The White Witch's plan to kill Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is based in the Deep Magic that is "written on that very Table of Stone which stands beside us [and] in letters deep as a spear is long on the firestones on the Secret Hill" (128). In *The Silver Chair*, one of the clues which Jill and Eustace must find as part of their quest is a giant inscription embedded in a hill. Furthermore, the most powerful

textual object within *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is the book of spells which sits at the centre of Coriakin's library, which literalises the transformative power of text and in this is akin to the Magician's map.

The various means of charting territory employed throughout the series, as well as Pratt's anti-conquest, both centre the European observer—the system is dependent on the presence of this observer's gaze. In this context it is worth considering the relationship that the human children have with the secondary world in Lewis's works. In one sense, Narnia's existence is completely bounded by the gaze of the British children who are the books' protagonists. The creation of the world is witnessed by them in *The Magician's Nephew*; they see its end in *The Last Battle*. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Aslan informs the children that “the very reason why you were brought to Narnia [was] that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there” (188). This suggests that Narnia's function as a space is for the spiritual development of the British child, and recalls the similar use of imperial space as a testing ground for the protagonist of the adventure novel, discussed in previous chapters. This is not an equal relationship of course, as Caspian points out in the same book. He muses, “I wonder why you can get into our world and we never get into yours?” (176). The world of the reader cannot provide a space for development for the Narnians, as Narnia does for the British children. While there are, as I discuss in the next section, moments when the reality of Narnia threatens to encroach upon the boundaries of the “real” world of Britain, Narnia is on the whole a circumscribed space.

Anthony Pavlik discusses the contested “reality” of Narnia as a space, noting that on multiple occasions the books suggest that both this world and the “consensus reality” of our own world are “equally real.” Yet he points out that the narrator also refers to Narnia as “[the children's] own private and secret country,” suggesting that the children in some way own the country (102). Furthermore, he suggests the possibility of the “creative construction” of Narnia by the children (much as Lewis and his brother collaborated on the creation of a fictional world known as “Boxen”), noting that in “real” terms they do not leave the domestic spaces of the attic (in *The Magician's Nephew*), the wardrobe (in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), or the back bedroom (in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) in their travels. In *The Last Battle*, Susan Pevensie rejects the reality of Narnia entirely, describing it as “those funny



games we used to play when we were children” (128). Pavlik’s reading, as well as Susan’s, offers the possibility that Narnia only exists within the boundaries set for it by the children—its reality is contingent on its being imagined by a British child.

Even if we, along with the other children, reject Susan’s assertion that Narnia does not possess a reality separate to the children themselves, the text suggests that the presence of the children is vital to any action in Narnia. As a result, although we are told that thousands of years pass in Narnia between the visits of the children, rarely does this create a sense of this country as one with a separate history of its own.<sup>12</sup> In *The Last Battle*, Jewel explains to Jill that, while the human children are called into Narnia in times of great peril, “in between their visits there were hundreds and thousands of years when peaceful King followed peaceful King till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers, and there was really hardly anything to put into the History Books” (85). The implication is that nothing of importance happens in Narnia in the absence of a British child to observe it. As in Pratt’s anti-conquest, this is a formulation which posits the imperial (or secondary world) space as entirely circumscribed by, and dependent on, the gaze of the European observer.

That Narnia has no life beyond the children’s perception can be further inferred through an analysis of the material culture (or lack thereof) of this space. This chapter has already considered the ways in which Lewis’s books collapse the boundaries between the “natural” world and the lives of Narnia’s indigenous inhabitants, as well as the static nature of Narnian culture. Tolkien’s Middle-earth, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, features a considerable disparity in the material cultures of its Hobbits and the other communities mentioned in the books, yet within these communities we see evidence of agriculture and industry—and the wider secondary world created by Tolkien is provided with detailed maps, mythologies and languages. the *Chronicles of Narnia*, however, cannot be easily placed into an internally-consistent mythos—it’s hard to explain, for example, the presence of a sewing machine in the home of Mrs Beaver. In the face of such inconsistencies, questions over who produces food, or who builds houses, may appear fruitless, so that the

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<sup>12</sup> A rare exception to this rule occurs in *Prince Caspian*, when the children return to Narnia to discover that a seemingly ancient structure has been raised over the landmark that they knew as the Stone Table. “‘I say, Peter,’ whispered Edmund. ‘Look at those carvings on the walls. Don’t they look old? And yet we’re older than that. When we were last here, they hadn’t been made’” (139).

reader is invited to ignore the absence of signs that the Narnian landscape is inhabited. The only evidence of industry is in the form of the dwarfs, who all seem to be smiths. In *The Silver Chair*, Puddleglum the Marshwiggle worries that Narnia will face a bad harvest after the dry summer, and yet this is the only mention of agriculture. In Narnia as in the imperial travel narrative, “the seeing-man’s powers seem to dissolve into confused noise, distant sounds, a tree cut down by unseen hands. The question invited here is not ‘Where is everybody?’” but ‘Who is doing the work?’ and ‘For whom?’ It is on this point that liberal aspirations seem to become unable to represent themselves” (Pratt 180).

The emptiness and inertness of these landscapes serves an important ideological function. Describing the protocols of imperial mapmaking, Simon Ryan argues that “the cartographic practice of representing the unknown as a blank does not simply or innocently reflect gaps in European knowledge, but actively erases (and legitimizes the erasure of) existing social and geo-cultural formations in preparation for the projection and subsequent emplacement of a new order” (116). In an earlier chapter, I discussed the difficulties faced by the children in the *Swallows and Amazons* series in coming to terms with the fact that the land they wish to appropriate for their own purposes has its own history. “Only empty spaces can be settled,” note Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, with reference to the use of the doctrine of *terra nullius* in colonial Australia (5). The landscape needs to be emptied of history and culture before the British observer can claim it. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, Polly and Digory fly over the newly created world of Narnia, looking at the land below them, resulting in an illuminating passage:

There they could see the whole valley of Narnia stretched out to where, just before the eastern horizon, there was a gleam of the sea. And now they were so high that they could see tiny-looking jagged mountains appearing beyond the northwest moors, and plains of what looked like sand far in the south.

“I wish we had someone to tell us what all those places are,” said Digory.

“I don’t suppose they’re anywhere yet,” said Polly. “I mean, there’s no one there, and nothing happening. The world only began today.”

“No, but people will get there,” said Digory. “And then they’ll have histories, you know.”

“Well, it's a jolly good thing they haven't now,” said Polly. “Because nobody can be made to learn it. Battles and dates and all that rot. (136–138)

Though Digory warns that the empty landscape, once inhabited, will develop a history of its own, the other books in the series offer the comforting assurance that any such history will be of little account, and will not intrude upon the emptiness of the landscape. Despite the series' professed anticolonial stance, and the repeated insistence that the lives of Narnia's sentient and non-human indigenes be protected, Narnia is ultimately presented as empty space.

“There's no one there and nothing happening”; the landscape exists solely to be gazed upon and claimed by the British child.

#### **4.2 Further Up and Further In**

The first half of this chapter has discussed Narnia as an imperial space; the second will examine its presentation as a “domestic” or “English” space. As has been explored in earlier chapters, the decades after the First World War had seen a marked rise in interest in the British countryside. Concurrent with this was the rise of the “camping and tramping” genre of children's fiction, of which Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* series is the supreme example. While the *Chronicles of Narnia* cannot be described as examples of camping-and-tramping books (though they do feature many instances of characters camping and tramping through the Narnian landscape), they share with it a fascination with the countryside. In his discussion of the series fiction of the mid-twentieth century, Victor Watson claims that “for about thirty years children's literature was for the most part a vision of pastoral, a sustained and essentially adult elegy on a massive scale for dearly loved and vanishing rural ways of life, mediated through fiction intended for young readers” (79). Puzzlingly, Watson does not list the *Chronicles of Narnia* among the major series of this period (though he refers to them more than once), but they fall squarely within the period which he discusses. Moreover, the Narnian landscape is often depicted as an idealised version of the English countryside. My reading below aims to situate Lewis's series within this pastoral tradition in postimperial children's literature, as well as to demonstrate the ambivalent portrayal of the secondary world as simultaneously “English” and “British.”

I have already discussed the “wider culture of national retrenchment” (109) identified by Jed Esty in England from the 1930s. Esty notes that this “antidiasporic thinking” existed across the political spectrum, and connects it to “a broader structural shift associated with the contraction of empire and the collapse of interwar cosmopolitanism.” The colonies are depicted as unknowable and unassimilable into: “The colonies simply cannot be made sense of—the logical corollary being, of course, that only one place can really be known or represented, encompassed or plumbed by an English writer: England” (110). While Esty does not specifically address either genre fiction or children’s literature, he does locate both Tolkien and C.S. Lewis within his framework. It is worth considering, therefore, the extent to which Lewis fits into this particular conception of late imperial writing. Esty places him among the “Oxford Christians, or Inklings, [who] emerged in the 1930s as well, to play popular variations on the domesticated quest romance and to reenchant the English landscape,” and who “provide explicit and thematic versions of the nativist romance that appears in an abstract, mediated form in late Eliot” (118). Like Tolkien and Charles Williams, also members of this group, Lewis draws on earlier genres and traditions in order to achieve this effect. As I have already shown, Tolkien’s work is strongly influenced by the adventure quests of H. Rider Haggard as well as the older heroic romance. In his *Space Trilogy* (1938–1945), Lewis shows a clear engagement with the science fiction of H.G. Wells in particular—*Out of the Silent Planet* is in close conversation with *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). Though these books invent an entire cosmology, the third of the books, *That Hideous Strength*, also draws upon the Arthurian tradition, so that the Matter of Britain is given cosmic significance. Yet the difference that Esty identifies between Lewis and his peers and “the more ‘minor-chord’” writers may be one of degree rather than of kind—while the *Space Trilogy* books begin and end in England (and the final book is set there entirely), in the *Narnia* books, what Esty describes as the “resacralisation” of the English landscape must take place outside England in an entirely separate world.

The use of “England” rather than “Britain” is significant here, particularly in light of Lewis’s own Irish ancestry.<sup>13</sup> However, as has been discussed in previous chapters, “the word Britain seemed to attract imperial ambitions” (Samuel 46). English, Raphael Samuel suggests, “in its twentieth-century usage is an altogether more introverted term than ‘British’

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<sup>13</sup> Esty includes the South Africa-born Tolkien among these English writers as well—as discussed in the previous chapter, Tolkien appears to have rejected a British identity in favour of an English one.

and largely associated with images of landscape, beauty and home rather than those of national greatness” (48). Thus “England” or “English” would appear to be more in keeping with the broader trend of national retrenchment that, for Esty, characterises the period. Ian Baucom suggests that in fact Englishness was constructed *in opposition to* empire:

Its conservators could save Englishness by insisting that the empire had little or nothing to do with England, by defining imperial space as something subordinate to but quite different from English space, and by identifying the empire’s subjects as persons subordinate to but quite different from England’s subjects—by identifying these as *British* spaces and *British* subjects: a solution that manages the neat trick of allowing England to simultaneously avow and disavow its empire [...] Englishness, as a form of meditation on imperialism, has regularly exhibited a double logic of affirmation and denial. (6–7)

In *The Magician’s Nephew*, Aslan insists that Digory Kirke, a British child, must plant the apple that will grow into a tree to protect the country, because “[had any Narnian done this] it would have done so by making Narnia into another strong and cruel empire like Charn, not the kindly land I mean it to be” (162). In the first half of this chapter I demonstrated the various ways in which powerful figures in the Chronicles of Narnia are absolved of imperial ambition. But here we see something more: *the land itself* is constructed in a manner which renders it innocent of empire. In the context of Baucom’s understanding of Englishness, it is unsurprising that the Narnian landscape tends to resemble what Hazel Sheeky Bird, drawing on Patrick Wright, describes as “Deep England”; “a comforting idea of a green, pleasant and socially harmonious land” (*National Identity* 5). Through the device of the secondary world, the Chronicles of Narnia are able to construct an ideal “English space”; one which is presented to us as entirely separate from and untainted by imperial connotations, and whose origins preclude the possibility of its becoming “a strong and cruel empire.” As I have already shown, however, imperial narratives are ubiquitous in the Narnia novels, so that even in the secondary world, these English and imperial conceptions of space cannot entirely be separated.

*The Horse and His Boy* makes for a particularly interesting case study for reading Narnia as an English space. This book is the story of Shasta, the titular “boy”, who grows up in the Southern land of Calormen as the adopted son of a cruel fisherman. When his father

plans to sell him to a Calormene lord he runs away to Narnia, taking with him the lord's Narnian Talking Horse, Bree. Along the way the two meet and ally with a young Calormene noblewoman, and the group stumble upon, and foil, a Calormene plot to invade both Narnia and its neighbouring country of Archenland.

Of the seven books in the series, *The Horse and his Boy* alone does not feature travel between the worlds, but is set entirely in Narnia and its surrounding lands. However, the book follows the broader structure of the portal-quest fantasy, as Mendlesohn would describe it, by taking its main character out of surroundings which seem mundane to him, and into an Other space. At the beginning of the book the "grassy slope running up to a level ridge and beyond that the sky" (12) is the boundary of Shasta's world; his encounter with Bree leads him, first, into the wider world outside his village, and then, on his arrivals into Archenland and Narnia, into two entirely different societies.

The topography of Narnia is invoked long before the characters arrive in this landscape. Early on Bree remembers "The happy land of Narnia—Narnia of the heathery mountains and the thymy downs, Narnia of the many rivers, the plashing glens, the mossy caverns and the deep forests ringing with the hammers of the Dwarfs" (17). When the company arrives in the neighbouring country of Archenland (Archenland and Narnia are close allies, and function in the text as one entity), they pass through the mountains:

The river which they had been following here joined a broader river, wide and turbulent, which flowed from their left to their right, towards the east. Beyond this new river a delightful country rose gently in low hills, ridge beyond ridge, to the Northern Mountains themselves. To the right there were rocky pinnacles, one or two of them with snow clinging to the ledges. To the left, pine-clad slopes, frowning cliffs, narrow gorges, and blue peaks stretched away as far as the eye could reach. He could no longer make out Mount Pire. Straight ahead the mountain range sank to a wooded saddle which of course must be the pass from Archenland into Narnia. (110)

Shasta's entry into Narnia proper similarly involves travel through a mountain pass:

The sun had only just risen, and it had risen out of the forests which he saw low down and far away on his right. The country which he was looking at was absolutely new to

him. It was a green valley-land dotted with trees through which he caught the gleam of a river that wound away roughly to the North-West. On the far side of the valley there were high and even rocky hills, but they were lower than the mountains he had seen yesterday. (132)

These passages are quoted at length here because they conform so clearly to the seeing-man descriptions of the landscape as described by Mary Louise Pratt—in both cases Shasta gazes upon a new, empty landscape as if from a great height. As had been discussed in earlier chapters, the turn towards the English countryside in the first half of the twentieth century often took the form of wielding imperial frameworks for creating knowledge upon the domestic landscape. Narnia's "Englishness" is constructed here in partial opposition to the land of Calormen, from which Shasta and his companions have escaped. Calormen is described as a land of dark-skinned people who wear turbans and wield scimitars (12), are grave and mysterious (52), and use an elaborate style of speech and poetry. Of its landscape we know that cypress and orange trees grow there, and that the country is separated from the Northern lands of Narnia and Archenland by a great desert. Calormen is therefore an example of what Myles Balfe calls "the Fantastic East," a trope within fantasy literature which endlessly reproduces orientalist depictions of an imagined (and usually medievalist) Middle East, against which a virtuous West is constructed (79). Accordingly, Narnia and Archenland are closely associated with England. King Lune of Archenland is introduced to Shasta on a hunting party (122) and to Aravis after "making a round of the kennels" (166), both traditionally English pursuits, while Shasta's introduction to Narnia is accompanied by a breakfast of porridge, bacon and eggs, and toast (136). The landscapes of Narnia and Archenland recall the image of the British countryside in camping-and-tramping fiction; it is a "tranquil landscape [...] which was somewhat predicated on the ability to imagine the countryside as a private, hence empty, space" (Bird, *National Identity* 59). The characters' entry into this landscape is through a valley "with its brown, cool river, and grass and moss and wild flowers and rhododendrons" (109), while Archenland is "open park-like country with no roads or houses in sight" and "oaks, beeches, silver birches, rowans, and sweet chestnuts" (111). The landscapes thus invoked are aspects of what Jane Suzanne Carroll calls the "Green topos," and which she describes as particularly prominent in children's literature (49). The seemingly cultivated and yet empty "park-like" vistas of Archenland recall the Garden space which is, for Carroll, "a deliberately distilled version of the natural world" (51), whereas the wilder landscape is modelled on the "Pleasance" that is central to the pastoral

tradition. Carroll draws on the work of John David Moore, who suggests that these Arcadian spaces are inseparable from children's literature as a whole? (J.S. Carroll 71–72, Moore 47).<sup>14</sup>

In the case of *The Horse and his Boy*, it is significant that these descriptions of the landscape are from the perspective of Shasta and Aravis, characters who have lived in Calormen all their lives. In presenting Narnia and Archenland from their perspectives, *The Horse and His Boy* partially reverses the orientalisng gaze of the adventure story; at several points in the text, the Narnians visiting the city of Tashbaan are even referred to as “Barbarians” by the Calormene characters. Maria Nikolajeva suggests that this reversal may extend to the structure of the secondary world itself. Since, unlike the other books in the series, *The Horse and His Boy* is told entirely from the perspective of characters who belong to Narnia and its surrounding lands, what is in the other books the secondary world becomes here the *primary* world; while “the present rulers of Narnia are visitors from the secondary world” (*Magic Code* 39). Nikolajeva's reading would suggest that *The Horse and his Boy* is in fact a version of what Mendlesohn refers to as the “intrusion fantasy;” however, although the kings and queens of Narnia are acknowledged to be from another world, they are already established as Narnians within the text. Nikolajeva is correct in suggesting that this reversal of travel between the primary and secondary worlds is of little significance to the text itself—the shift in perspective from the British to the Calormene children is, I would suggest, of more importance.

However, this shift in perspective is only a partial one. In *The Horse and His Boy*, Shasta and Aravis look upon the country of Narnia as outsiders, but the narratorial voice of the text is clearly addressing a reader to whom, it is assumed, this landscape and culture will be more familiar than those of Calormen. When Shasta is unfamiliar with the Narnian trees, the reader is told that “you would probably have known” what they were (111). In a scene set in the Calormene city of Tashbaan, the narrator wonders whether the reader would like Calormene food, whereas in Narnia he assumes the same reader to be familiar with the smell of bacon, eggs, and mushrooms (136). Although Shasta has been raised in Calormen, his fair

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<sup>14</sup> Neither Carroll nor Moore locates this pastoral impulse in children's literature within a particular national context, though it is important to note here that all of their examples are works of British children's literature.



skin ensures that the characters around him all recognise him to be of Northern ancestry, and he is eventually revealed to be a prince of Archenland. Even in this book, then, the narratorial perspective of the books is Narnian, and the Narnian perspective is aligned with that of the implied British child reader who, it is assumed, will be familiar with these landscapes and foods.

Throughout the series, Narnia itself is constructed as inherently English. Food in particular is often a marker of cultural identity (and cultural values) in the series. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch's tellingly named Turkish delight is contrasted with Mrs Beaver's fried fish, potatoes, and marmalade roll and Mr Tumnus's buttered toast; earlier in *The Horse and His Boy* Shasta has feasted on "snipe stuffed with almonds and truffles, and a complicated dish made of chicken-livers and rice and raisins and nuts," which the narrator suggests the reader would probably dislike (64). The foods and spaces associated with "the Orient" are thus marked out as strange (and in the case of the Turkish delight, outrightly unwholesome). Meanwhile, much like the interior of Bag End in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the domestic spaces of the homes of Duffle the Dwarf (*The Horse and his Boy*), Mr Tumnus, and the Beavers (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) are also constructed as English, full of familiar objects, foods and rituals.

If Narnia is presented as "English space" through these details, it is a particularly trans-historical form of Englishness. Edward James draws attention to the fantasy convention of situating secondary worlds in an unspecified medieval setting, and attributes the popularity of this convention to Tolkien and Lewis in particular (63).<sup>15</sup> For Maria Sachiko Cecire, the effect of these "medievalisms" is to create and reinforce "a nationalistic tradition of nostalgia for the Middle Ages." She suggests that the popularity of these texts lies in their "reassuring assertion of tropes of the past that confirm and celebrate 'native' Britishness" ("Medievalism" 396). Cecire's reading is congruent with that of Helen Young who, noting the recurrence of neo-medieval settings in the genre, adds that "[m]edievalist feudal monarchies, made palatable to modern readers by a strong sense of *noblesse oblige* among

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<sup>15</sup> James is correct in making a connection between the use of medievalism by these authors and its wider popularity within the genre, but this reading doesn't take into account the wide use of medievalism in the nineteenth century, and its use as a setting for, for example, Arthurian retellings.

high-born protagonists, [are] conventionally contrasted with an exoticized and often ‘Oriental’ empire” (45). Young’s reading is thus particularly relevant to *The Horse and his Boy*. The children themselves provide a linking narrative across time for the native Narnians—when the Pevensies return to Narnia in *Prince Caspian*, they describe their position as being like that of “Crusaders or Anglo-Saxons or Ancient Britons or someone coming back to modern England” (34). As I have already shown, the material culture of Narnia remains stagnant across the series. The result is to suggest an eternal vision of England that is premodern and unchanging.

*The Last Battle*, the final book in the series, reinforces this sense of an eternal England. Though this book dramatises the end of Narnia (and, as the reader eventually discovers, the deaths of the British characters), the children immediately find themselves in a space that is identical to the world that they have left, but somehow “More like the real thing” (158), so that the characters instinctively understand it as their true home:

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried:

“I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here! This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now. The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looked a little like this.” (161)

Exhorted to travel “further up and further in,” they discover that the farther they travel into the space, the closer they come to a place which seems the ideal (Plato is explicitly invoked by the text) of Narnia and England, both of which appear to be represented within the space. The “England” that is presented here is, like Narnia, independent of historical change; seeing the home they thought had been destroyed, the children learn that they “are looking at the England within England, the real England [...] in that inner England no good thing is destroyed” (170). This “inner” England has resonances with the concept described by Patrick Wright as “Deep England,” a vaguely defined sense of a shared national heritage.

Much as the aesthetic emptiness of imperial vistas serves to remove all traces of indigenous inhabitation from the landscape, this portrayal of a timeless Deep England is the product of a particular historical moment and serves particular functions. As Raymond

Williams has demonstrated, the changing attitudes towards the English landscape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had their basis in economic questions of who had rights to the land; so that the “clearing of parks as ‘Arcadian’ prospects depended on the completed system of exploitation of the agricultural and genuinely pastoral lands beyond the park boundaries” (154). Moore cautions that what appears to be a timeless Arcadian past in such pastoral narratives has been arranged to be seen “from the windows of the great country houses” (53).<sup>16</sup> Rather than being eternal or transhistorical, this vision of “inner England” is culturally and chronologically specific and contested.

For Wright, “a sense of external threat has played a crucial part in the definition of Deep England,” even though this threat “is more likely to be buried in the foundations of the nation than to be figured out with any historiographical accuracy” (81). Thus England, as it is constructed within this discourse of nationhood, is a space both idealised and constantly under threat. At several points in the series it is suggested that the real England’s borders are less than secure. As I mention above, the relationship between the primary and secondary world is an unequal one, as shown in Caspian’s complaint in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* that “you can get into our world and we never get into yours”. Yet the British children’s access to Narnia is not as straightforward as this would imply; as Anthony Pavlik has shown, the children themselves never have control over the nature of movement between the worlds (106). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we discover that the wardrobe in Professor Kirke’s house does not always act as a portal to the other world; when Lucy tells her siblings of her discovery and they try to investigate, the wardrobe appears perfectly ordinary. In *Prince Caspian*, the Pevensie children are summoned to Narnia by the native Narnians who require their help, and themselves expressing discomfort at the relations between the worlds thus implied:

“I don’t know why you shouldn’t believe it,” said Lucy, “if you believe in magic at all. Aren’t there lots of stories about magic forcing people out of one place—out of one world—into another? I mean, when a magician in *The Arabian Nights* calls up a Jinn, it has to come. We had to come, just like that.”

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<sup>16</sup> The secondary world does contain at least one country house; Coriakin’s residence is described as a “great English house” (102). Raymond Williams notes that the owners of such houses created “below their windows [...] a rural landscape emptied of rural labour and of labourers” (155); it is significant that at the beginning of the Island of the Voices episode the rural labourers are literally invisible.

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

“And now we know what it feels like for the Jinn,” said Edmund with a chuckle.

“Golly! It's a bit uncomfortable to know that we can be whistled for like that. (90)

The children's discomfort here stems from a sense that the inverted power dynamics of this relationship are in some way unexpected. The comparison with djinni suggests again that in some contexts the children's own world might be the secondary world—and further, reinforces a link between the secondary world and the “Orient”. The children are rarely seen attempting to access Narnia on their own, or out of choice. In *The Last Battle*, they do attempt to travel there of their own volition with the use of Uncle Andrew's magic rings, but are prevented from doing so by a train accident which, in killing them, throws them into Narnia before the rings can be used. All of this suggests that the boundaries between the two worlds are something that is out of the children's control—that the British children are subject to the secondary world rather than displaying mastery over it.

However, through most of the series, travel between the world of the children (and the reader) and other spaces remains unidirectional. Two brief exceptions to this occur in *The Last Battle* and *The Silver Chair*. In *The Last Battle*, King Tirian's despair allows him partially to breach the barrier between the worlds; he appears as a ghostly apparition in the house where the friends of Narnia are gathered. At the end of *The Silver Chair*, the dead King Caspian is briefly granted a glimpse of the children's world and assists them in punishing a group of bullies. A more literal travelling between the worlds takes place in *The Magician's Nephew* when Digory and Polly inadvertently bring the evil queen Jadis back to London from the dying world of Charn. Arriving in “our” world, she immediately announces a plan for world domination:

Listen to your first task. I see we are in a large city. Procure for me at once a chariot or a flying carpet or a well-trained dragon, or whatever is usual for royal and noble persons in your land. Then bring me to places where I can get clothes and jewels and slaves fit for my rank. Tomorrow I will begin the conquest of the world. (70)

As various critics have shown, *The Magician's Nephew* is a novel in conversation with the children's books of E. Nesbit.<sup>17</sup> The book begins with a suggestion that the events depicted are contemporaneous with the times when "the Bastables were looking for treasure in the Lewisham Road" (9).<sup>18</sup> Mervyn Nicholson suggests that this early reference to Nesbit signals a "clear and explicit" debt to the author (52). The connection between the two authors is further strengthened when Jadis finds her way to London; these scenes echo the visit of the Babylonian Queen to Edwardian London in Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (published in 1906). Like Jadis, the Babylonian Queen arrives by magic (out of the distant past, where the children have travelled with the Psammead), is inappropriately dressed for London, attempts to steal jewellery, and causes chaos for the children. Eitan Bar-Yosef suggests that the episode of the Babylonian Queen is itself in the tradition of the reverse colonisation narratives of the late Victorian period, epitomised by H. Rider Haggard's *She*. Yet rather than presenting the Babylonian Queen as a threat, Nesbit's fantasy "all but lacks the deep sense of anxiety which characterizes other reverse colonization narratives. What could easily have been depicted as a spectacle of horror is presented in *The Amulet* as an almost liberating experience" (Bar-Yosef 6). Nesbit not only has her queen feed the poor, but also makes a partial but pointed critique of British imperialism.

Lewis's Jadis appears to be influenced by both Nesbit and Haggard. While the comic tone and many of the particulars of the plot are taken from *The Story of the Amulet*, Nicholson feels that Jadis "owes more to Haggard than she does to Nesbit" (52). He identifies a number of parallels between the two women and their circumstances as they are depicted by Haggard and Lewis, including the doomed cities over which they rule, and the two queens' immortality, ruthlessness, and dazzling beauty. Unlike the Babylonian Queen, however, Jadis intends real harm (Nesbit's queen is largely well-meaning). Rather than adopting Nesbit's broadly anti-imperial politics, then, Lewis gestures back to the imperial gothic tradition, placing *The Magician's Nephew* in a tradition of novels which "reflected a growing apprehension concerning Britain's imperial hegemony, [and] responded to a disturbing sense of cultural guilt" (Bar-Yosef 5).

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Marcus Crouch, *Treasure Seekers and Borrowers* (Library Association, 1962), and C.N. Manlove, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England* (Cybereditions, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> The reference is to Nesbit's 1899 novel *The Treasure-Seekers*.

That Jadis should arrive in London is also a matter of some significance. John McLeod notes the extent to which London in particular was changing in the post-war years, so that “another London [was] being created here, one which admit[ted] the times and places of overseas to the supposedly humdrum heart of the aged British empire” (1). This “postcolonial London”, as he terms it, was “the result of a number of contexts resulting from colonialism and its legacy [including] the relatively large-scale movement of people into London from countries with a history of colonialism” (7). Wendy Webster describes the changing discourse around migration in the 1950s and 1960s:

Loss of imperial power undermined the authoritarian interpretation of a manly and powerful nation, and another story developed around migrants registered such loss through reversing many themes within the authoritarian view. In place of the vision of Britain bringing order to the colonies, black and Asian Commonwealth migrants were portrayed as bringing disorder to the metropolis. (127)

As I will demonstrate in the next two chapters, the development of this narrative of outsiders breaching the boundaries of Britain and bringing chaos in their wake would be marked by a shift in fantastic narratives from the portal-quest to the intrusion fantasy. The irruption of Jadis into Edwardian London is still here treated as comic, in comparison to the supernatural intrusions discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Far more serious within the series are the several attempts by invaders from within the secondary world to attack or invade Narnia. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Narnia is portrayed as a colonisable space throughout the Chronicles, and it is subject to conquests or attempted conquests by Andrew Ketterley, the White Witch, the Calormenes, the Telmarines, and the Lady of the Green Kirtle over the course of the series. Of most interest here are the two invasions by the Calormenes in *The Horse and His Boy* and *The Last Battle*. Unlike the two sorceresses, the Calormenes do not possess supernatural powers—they merely have a bigger army. In *The Last Battle*, their successful conquest of Narnia follows a pattern surprisingly familiar from real British imperial history. The Calormenes arrive as traders, and resort to military force (and religious conversion) when their attempts to exploit the resources of Narnia are met with resistance. In *The Horse and his Boy*, we learn that Calormen has long wished to conquer Narnia, which “is not the fourth size of one of your least provinces. A thousand spears could conquer it in five weeks. It is an unseemly blot on the skirts of your empire” (91). As Edmund Pevensie

explains elsewhere in the novel, “We are a little land. And little lands on the borders of a great empire were always hateful to the lords of the great empire” (59). Rather than the imperial, civilising force it appears to be in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Narnia here is portrayed as the beleaguered small nation fighting to maintain its own autonomy in the face of attacks from outside. This portrayal of a country under constant threat of attacks from outside is one that was widespread in the British national discourse in the years following the Second World War. Drawing on Winston Churchill’s construction of Britain at the triangulation point of American, European and Commonwealth relations, Paul Gilroy describes a national “fixation” with the idea of “British particularity [...] under attack from three different directions” (*After Empire* 13). The consequences of this fixation are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Within the internal chronology of the series, *The Horse and His Boy* is the first book in which the reader encounters other countries within the secondary world. Just as it is unclear in much of imperial discourse exactly which territories are and are not included in the word “Britain,” within Lewis’s series, “Narnia” appears to be a term used both for the whole of the secondary world (by Aslan, as well as by the children, so that this inconsistency cannot be explained away as a misunderstanding) and for a particular country within that world. Though at other points in the series we hear mention of the neighbouring countries of Archenland and Calormene, as well as the further land of Telmar, this is the only book in the series to venture outside “Narnian” territory and into the spaces of these competing political entities. The political status of the spaces outside these named countries is also left vaguely-defined—at various points in the series, we learn that the Lone Islands and the giants in the North pay tribute to Narnia, yet this too seems at odds with the image of Narnia as a small nation under siege.

Hazel Sheeky Bird differentiates between two “types” of geographical imagination: the regional and the imperial. The imperial geographic imagination has been discussed at some length earlier in this chapter. The regional geographical imagination, she claims, “called for the development of local citizenship through an intense and deep scrutiny of the local area,” creating a “geographical self” and an attendant sense of belonging (*National Identity* 87). These two modes of imagining space correspond roughly to the “English” and

“imperial” spaces described by Ian Baucom. At various points in the series, Narnia functions imperially, as space to be discovered and claimed, or as the centre of an imperial force—that is, as “British” space, rather than English. At other points it functions as a regional space, the “Deep England” from which regional identity is derived. Homi Bhabha reminds us that the “locality” of national culture

is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, not must it be seen simply as ‘other’ in relation to what is outside it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new ‘people’ in relation to the body politic, [...] producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. (“Introduction” 4)

Lewis’s friend and colleague J.R.R. Tolkien famously disapproved of the Chronicles of Narnia for their lack of cohesion. Yet, as Bhabha suggests, the discourse of nationhood itself lacks this cohesion. Through their “Janus-faced” “wavering between vocabularies”, the Chronicles of Narnia allow the secondary world to function simultaneously as Britain, England, and the desired colonial Other. Seen simultaneously from inside and outside, and forced to embody inherently contradictory narratives of nationhood simultaneously, Narnia in its incoherence embodies the ambivalence of the national discourse which produces it.



## Chapter 5. The Empire at Home: Domestic Fantasies

This chapter shifts the focus of this thesis from a detailed study of individual authors' works to a consideration of multiple authors writing over the period often described as the "second golden age" of children's literature. This "second golden age" is generally considered to have begun soon after the Second World War, though critics of children's literature seem unable to come to a consensus as to the exact period to which it refers. For C. N. Manlove, the period commences directly after the war (81–82), while John Rowe Townsend locates its beginnings in "the early to middle fifties" (209). Lucy Pearson suggests 1950–1979 as appropriate start and end points for this golden age (*Making* 1). The books discussed in this chapter and the next all fall broadly within the dates suggested by these critics.

My decision to move from a discussion of single authors to one encompassing multiple contemporaneous works is engendered in part by changes in children's publishing over this period. Pearson demonstrates that, while the first half of the twentieth century saw the publication of a number of landmark works which would become part of the British children's literary canon, a paucity of critical attention towards children's literature "meant that such developments happened in isolation" (*Making* 15). After the war, and in the 1960s in particular, not only was the number of children's books far higher than it had previously been, but "the endeavour of defining and producing 'quality' children's literature [...] was not fragmented or confined to a single discipline, but was part of the dominant social discourse" (16). This change in the culture surrounding children's literature makes it both easier, and more useful, to read the works of these authors in relation to one another, and as sharing many of the same influences and contexts, than as the productions of isolated authors.

As Pearson has elsewhere shown, the establishment of the Carnegie Medal in 1936 was a formative moment in the development of a British children's literature canon and "a key cultural site for postwar Britain" ("Prizing"), one which, in the decades that followed, continued to play an active role in the construction and interrogation of national identity. Most of the fantasy authors whose works I examine below all form a part of this literary canon—Mary Norton, Alan Garner, Lucy Boston, and Penelope Lively are all Carnegie Medal winners, as are William Mayne and Sheena Porter, whose work is discussed in the following chapter. Susan Cooper has been shortlisted for the award, while Penelope Farmer

received Carnegie commendations. T.H. White is the sole exception—but though his work has never been recognised by the Carnegie Medal, it is an acknowledged part of both the fantasy and British children’s literature canons, so that its inclusion here is merited.

In previous chapters I have suggested that the secondary worlds of Middle-earth and Narnia in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis function as spaces upon which several contradictory attitudes and impulses towards empire, and the nation in relation to the empire, may be carried out. For example, both authors construct idealised versions of England within their fantastic secondary worlds, while also offering up to the reader the unexplored, mappable spaces of imperial fiction; Lewis’s books also simultaneously allow the reader to act out an imperial fantasy and to absolve herself of imperial designs. In his notes on the imagined “other spaces,” that he refers to as heterotopias, Michel Foucault claims that one of the advantages of such a space is that it “is capable of juxtaposing [...] several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). Ian Baucom, drawing on Frantz Fanon’s contention that national culture after empire is “a zone of occult instability,” (therefore juxtaposing incompatible sites within it), likewise considers a series of spaces which he believes to have “housed the disciplinary projects of imperialism and the imperial destabilizations and reformations of English identity” (4). Both Baucom and Foucault are referring to “imagined” sites within the real world, but as I have shown in my previous chapter, it is evident that secondary worlds like Lewis’s Narnia fulfil a similar set of functions—offering a space in which to continue imperial spatial relations, as well as one in which to negotiate a changing national identity. Further, it is precisely the fantastic nature of the secondary world that allows it to perform these functions.

Edward James suggests that the influence of Tolkien and Lewis was a major factor behind the “explosion” of genre fantasy from the mid-twentieth century, and credits Tolkien in particular with “normalizing the idea of a secondary world” (65). In a study of the works of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper, C. Butler suggests that Lewis and Tolkien’s position as academics at Oxford further influenced the work of this generation of authors that immediately followed their own (*Four British Fantasists* 15). Both Butler and James credit Tolkien with the establishment of several characteristics of genre fantasy; among these James includes “thinning,” or a sense of the secondary world in decline, and the narrative of the quest which will heal the world (64).

Given Tolkien's evident centrality to the development of fantasy as a popular genre, it is surprising that, as Butler notes, almost none of the authors included in *Four British Fantasists* "set their books in a wholly secondary world" (21).<sup>1</sup> This is also true of the works I will be considering in this chapter. While much of the children's literature written in the decades after the Second World War takes the form of fantasy, few of these books foreground secondary worlds, and the majority are set wholly in our own world. As I will demonstrate, the fantasies written in this period show a shift in focus from the "other" space (whether of the empire or of the secondary world) to England and the domestic space, while simultaneously suggesting a blurring of the boundaries between those two spaces.

This chapter will examine two types of domestic space in a set of books which can be broadly divided by chronology. In the first section I will examine the role of the country house in some major canonical works of British children's fantasy—including T.H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946), Lucy M. Boston's *Green Knowe* books (1954–1976), and Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952). As I will demonstrate, in each of these books, the house itself, as a heritage institution, forms a link with imperial space, and itself becomes a space in which tensions around Britain's imperial past and post-imperial present can be played out. I will then go on to consider the space of the home in a set of later fantasies—Alan Garner's *Elidor* (1965), Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* (1973), Penelope Lively's *The House at Norham Gardens* (1974), and *A Castle of Bone* (1972) by Penelope Farmer. I will analyse a series of images of the home under threat in these books, and argue that a shifting understanding of empire and of Britain's place in the world can be seen in the changing relationship between the British home and the "other" space. Finally, in both sections of the chapter, I will discuss the presence of racial others within the home at a time of vastly increased immigration from the Commonwealth countries to the British Isles.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler mentions Diana Wynne Jones's *Dalemark* quartet (1975–1993) as one of a very few exceptions to this rule. There has not been space here to discuss Wynne Jones's considerable corpus of works, but it is worth noting that, while her works frequently feature travel between worlds, this is a rare instance in which a book or series is set entirely in a single secondary world.

## 5.1 The Country House

Valerie Krips describes a turn towards the development of heritage in postwar Britain, in which the country house played an increasingly prominent role. In the wake of the two World Wars and with changes in land ownership, formerly large estates had been fragmented and the country houses were in a state of decline. At this point, many of these properties were acquired by the National Trust, and were developed as key sites of national heritage: “As ‘heritage’ objects, the houses were to be transformed; they were to inhabit a newly imagined public sphere” (Krips 3). The motif of the country house as the site in which British history and culture are preserved recurs in a number of mid-century children’s books, including those discussed below. However, for Krips, the past to which Britain turned after the Second World War was “not that of empire and imperial conquest, but one of (citing Patrick Wright)

“precious and imperilled traces” [...], a closely held iconography of what it is to be English—all of them appealing in one covertly projective way or another to the historic and sacrosanct identity of the nation [and which] were metonymic of a world lost not only to history books, records and archives, but to the day-to-day experience of individuals. (2)

What Krips is suggesting here is that that the end of the Second World War and the beginning of decolonisation engendered a deliberate turning *away* from imperial history in favour of an alternative domestic English tradition, of which the country house then becomes a symbol. However, as I have already shown in previous chapters which discuss the effects of this “inward” turn towards the domestic landscape, the relationship between imperial and domestic traditions is not as clear cut as Krips implies, given that these two concepts are thoroughly intertwined. This is particularly so in the case of the country house. As Edward Said famously demonstrates in his reading of Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, the domestic space of the English country house is sustained by goods and capital which come from the wider empire (Said 69). As a result, as Ian Baucom declares, the country house “signifies *both* Englishness *and* empire” (166, my emphasis) so that the two concepts are here inextricable from one another.

In C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the space of the country house provides a link between the children’s native England and the “imperial” spaces of the secondary world. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the English and Narnian travellers arrive at the Island of the Voices to find “level lawns in which the grass

was as smooth and short as it used to be in the grounds of a great English house where ten gardeners were kept” (102), and a tree-lined avenue which leads to a house “of a beautiful mellow stone, many-windowed and partially covered with ivy” (104). The “English” character of the house is clearly significant, as a few pages later the reader is informed once again that the whole of the estate looks “very like somewhere in England” (113). This house is the home of the magician Coriakin who, as I have already discussed, functions within the text as a colonial governor appointed to rule over the race of Dufflepuds. Englishness and empire are closely linked here; Coriakin’s position may be a colonial one, and the Island of the Voices itself may be positioned in imperial space within the text (it is discovered by the Narnians on a voyage to explore and colonise unknown territory) but his authority over the Dufflepuds derives in part from the Englishness of his home, and the ways in which it signals his values to be the correct ones. Thus imperial power is centred in the domestic English institution of the country house.

Within the context of the series, an even more significant country house is the one described in the first published book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. At the beginning of that novel, the Pevensie children are staying in

the sort of house that is mentioned in guide books and even in histories; [...] And when parties of sightseers arrived and asked to see the house, the Professor always gave them permission, and Mrs Macready, the housekeeper, showed them round, telling them about the pictures and the armour, and the rare books in the library. (50)

Professor Kirke’s house, we learn, contains libraries, suits of armour, galleries of pictures, and is “the sort of house that you never seem to come to the end of, and it was full of unexpected places” (11). One of these “unexpected places,” as I discuss in the previous chapter, is “a room all hung with green, with a harp in one corner” which Nicole DuPlessis believes to represent Lewis’s native Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Another, the reader discovers, is the portal leading to the world of Narnia. As I argue in the previous chapter, the relationship in which the secondary-world space sits with regard to Britain in many ways resembles the relationship between the colonies and Britain. That one of Britain’s real ex-colonies should be represented within this house suggests a further connection between the house and the empire itself. In both *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, then, the country

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<sup>2</sup> The previous chapter discusses in more detail the influence of Lewis’s Irishness on the series.

house functions both as a portal into “other” or imperial space, and as a centre of imperial power.

This correlation between the country house, Britain, and the empire is made even more explicitly in an earlier fantasy text, T.H. White’s *Mistress Masham’s Repose* (1946). Much as Lewis makes frequent reference to older literary works, White links back to a tradition of British travel and adventure fiction that is intimately (and in the case of this book, explicitly) linked with empire. The novel takes its premise from Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and describes the experiences of the descendants of a handful of Lilliputians, brought back to England after their discovery by Gulliver, who have been living undetected on a small island in the weed-filled lake of a crumbling country estate, until they are discovered by the young heiress, Maria. The adventure narrative is transplanted into a domestic setting—Maria’s discovery of this new society of people takes place on her own land—and her attempts to befriend the Lilliputians both parallel and undercut Swift’s text.

C.N. Manlove sees in *Mistress Masham’s Repose* “material for celebrating the preservation of that eighteenth-century past [which White] so much valued and wrote about” (75), yet it is hard to see what in the text suggests that the novel’s attitude towards the past is one of celebration or even nostalgia. The country house and estate of Malplaquet are at first presented as being under threat from Maria’s scheming guardians, yet as the book progresses the estate itself is increasingly implicated in a disturbing narrative of colonial violence. The history of the Lilliputians (usually referred to by the text as “The People”) is presented as one of enslavement and exploitation—coming into contact with humans has meant that their lands were sacked and their people “convey’d, in an insanitary Box, to the Servitude of a foreign Clime” (60), and the text frequently draws out the parallels between this fictional history and Europe’s imperial past. For example, the People raise the Union Flag in Maria’s honour<sup>3</sup>. Maria is referred to as “the Conquistador of Lilliput”, and her friend the Professor suggests that she read up on the history of conquest in order to learn “what human beings were liable to do with newly discovered Peoples when they happened to be valuable” (100). The novel thus demonstrates a clear awareness and culpability of imperial violence. Malplaquet’s former grandeur and its institutional power are frequently undercut and presented as comic (the house

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<sup>3</sup> Maria has difficulty recognising the flag, as “the red stripes were missing on the diagonals. The real Union Jack did not come in until long after Hogarth’s time” (51–52). The nation, as well as the flag that symbolises it, is thus presented not as a fixed and timeless institution, but one subject to change.

boasts, for example, an Absolutely Insignificant Morning Room), while its history is shown to be rapacious—the South Front features “two colossal stone caryatids, with an antique frieze, stolen by the Fourth Duke from Herculaneum” (76), and there is a safe “in which the famous Malplaquet Diamond, 480 carats, stolen by William Malplaquet (‘the Great Publican’) from the Nawab of Poona, had once been locked up in beamed darkness” (183–184). These are both direct references to the British appropriation of foreign treasures (specifically the Elgin marbles and the Koh-i-noor diamond). Thus the heritage that the house represents is not only mocked, but is also depicted as both exploitative and morally corrupt, and characters like the Professor, whom the text presents as largely well-meaning, seem to be very aware of this.

Yet even these “good” human characters seem unable to treat the Lilliputians, or others like them, on equal terms. The Professor, who cautions Maria against using her strength to control the People, finds himself fantasising about capturing a Brobdingnagian giant (another of the peoples allegedly discovered by Gulliver on his travels) and putting him on display—before guiltily resolving to pay the giant a commission in order to assuage his own conscience. Maria initially treats the People as toys rather than living creatures; she begins her interaction with them by kidnapping a woman and her baby, fantasises about dressing them up, and later nearly kills one Lilliputian man when she places him in a model aircraft. Despite her good intentions, she constantly has to be reminded not to exert her power over them. *Mistress Masham’s Repose* thus demonstrates a complex attitude towards imperial power—it is acknowledged as wrong and exploitative, as it is in other contemporary works (including the Narnia books, as I have shown); but unlike those works it is able to implicate its heroes as well as its villains within imperial structures of power .

Despite these implicit critiques of empire and imperial exploitation, the novel seems unable to imagine alternatives to them, as is evident in its ending. Early in the book, Maria resolves to use her inheritance to attempt to undo imperial wrongs. She plans to charter a ship and help the People to find and rebuild their homeland. At the end of the book, however, although Maria has gained control of her fortune, the plans for the future of the People have changed. Returning to Malplaquet she is greeted by a Lilliputian orchestra playing “See, the Conquering Heroes Come”, as well as a banner, stating,

WELCOME HOME!  
A LOYAL GREETING FROM LILLIPUT  
TO THEIR MARIA!

AND TO HER ERUDITE FRIEND!

VENI, VIDI, VICI!

SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS! (248)

The People thus appear to have embraced Maria's rule over them, and present themselves as "loyal" subjects and "devoted tenants," though the phrase "sic semper tyrannis," used as a rallying cry against tyrants, suggests an undercurrent of discord. Maria uses her family fortune to restore the estate of Malplaquet, giving the Lilliputians small houses on the land that has, after all, been their home for several generations. The People now live in "a wonderful Japanese garden, shown to visitors each Friday on payment of 1/- for the Red Cross, with stunted trees and little houses and Hornby trains which really run" (253). The implication is that the People have been incorporated into the revived estate of Malplaquet, so that their homes are now a sort of tourist attraction. Rather than dismantling the structure which the novel has until now presented as a source of imperial violence, White suggests incorporating its victims into the larger institution. At the end of the book, Maria is still treating the People like toys—she has placed them in dollhouses and among toy trains. A benevolent colonial rule is the best solution the book is able to offer the Lilliputians. This simultaneous acknowledgement of the violence of empire and inability to conceive of alternatives is reminiscent of Edward Said's reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. As he observes, the novel is so thoroughly embedded within an imperial epistemology that "there is no use looking for other, non-imperialist alternatives; the system has simply eliminated them and made them unthinkable" (26). White's novel suffers a similar failure to imagine an alternative, non-exploitative relationship between its well-meaning humans and its Lilliputians.

While *Mistress Masham's Repose*, with its race of non-human beings, clearly presents itself as a fantasy novel, other contemporary children's books have a more ambiguous relationship to the genre. The six books that make up Lucy Boston's Green Knowe series all share a common setting, the old country house of Green Knowe, but the extent to which each of the books may be considered fantastic in nature varies. Three of the books are discussed in this chapter. While *The River at Green Knowe* (1959), the third book in the series, is a fantasy novel, the events of *A Stranger at Green Knowe* (1961), the fourth of the books, are more improbable than fantastic. *The Children of Green Knowe* (1954), the first of the books, has elements of the ghost story and is in addition a time-slip novel, a genre that, as Linda Hall



shows, has been associated with the old “dynastic home“ since the publication of E. Nesbit’s *The House of Arden* in 1908 (“Aristocratic Houses” 52). The genre requires a single physical focal point, and the space of the house fulfils this function in the majority of time-slip novels written during this period—in Philippa Pearce’s Carnegie Medal-winning novel *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (1958), for example, Tom travels between a modern flat in a converted building and the original Victorian home, while in Antonia Barber’s Carnegie-shortlisted *The Ghosts* (1969), the country house is not only the setting for the time-slip, but is eventually revealed to belong to the child protagonists. Maria Nikolajeva notes the “educational impetus” behind the time-slip narrative, and suggests that the genre presents “a credible and edifying picture of certain historical epochs and famous people” (“Development” 53). However, as Butler shows, time-slip and time-travel narratives written during the post-war period also feature “an accompanying reassurance that, despite obvious differences in material culture, the past has much about it that is familiar” (*Four British Fantasists* 65), thus providing a sense of continuity and stability. This sense of stability is located in the house itself, which not only offers “a sense of belonging to the displaced child” (Levy and Mendlesohn, 102) but provides a physical link between the past and present. Tess Cosslett describes the protagonists of time-slip novels as “deracinated,” and suggests that over the course of the novel they are able to “rediscover a sense of territorial belonging” (246). Cosslett’s use of the term “deracinated” is interesting, particularly as neither race nor empire is the focus of her analysis. However, it is notable that Tolly, the protagonist of *The Children of Green Knowe*, is sent to the house precisely because his family is in Burma. In a study of Mary Norton’s *The Borrowers*, discussed later in this chapter, Ariko Kawabata notes that the unnamed human boy in that book is Anglo-Indian, and that he too is presented as a deracinated child (126). What can be seen in these books is thus a series of characters whose sense of domestic identity has been disrupted by empire, so that their imperial origins form the basis of their need for “territorial belonging,” in Cosslett’s terms.

*The Children of Green Knowe* documents the protagonist Tolly’s first visit to the house. Tolly lacks a sense of local or familial identity—within the first few pages of the book we learn that his mother is dead, that his father and stepmother are in Burma, that he hardly knows his stepmother, and that he has had to spend previous holidays at his boarding school. Yet he soon discovers that he himself, along with his great-grandmother Mrs Oldknow, and her house, has deep historical roots within the surrounding landscape. Tolly’s full name, Toseland, is “a real old-fashioned name in these parts” (3), and he bears a close physical

resemblance to an ancestor, another Toseland. Mr Boggis, who works on the estate, is the latest of several generations of his family to hold this position, and the house itself dates back before the time of the crusades. Thus a sense of continuity is constantly emphasised. Tolly's adventures in this book take the form of a series of encounters with the ghosts of his own ancestors. As Linda Hall notes, with particular reference to Boston's series, the house "seems almost more important than the people who have lived within its walls, if only perhaps because it transcends their individual mortality by its lasting power and so can become the symbol as well as the receptacle of that continuity without which all human effort seems purposeless" ("The Pattern of Dead and Living" 227). Throughout Boston's series, then, the country house not only transcends time, but becomes a site for encounters with the past—and thus for coming to terms with local and national histories. As in the case of *Mistress Masham's Repose*, that national history may not always be a comfortable one.<sup>4</sup> This is certainly seen to be the case in *The River at Green Knowe*.

*The River at Green Knowe* begins with the decision of Dr Maud Biggin, a scientist, to invite two "displaced children" to spend the summer at the house which she has rented, to provide company for her great-niece, Ida. The three children, Oskar, Ida, and Ping, explore the river while Dr Biggin works on a book speculating about the existence of a race of prehistoric giant men. On one of their expeditions along the river, the children discover a giant, Terak, who, along with his mother, has been hiding from humans for several years. While Terak is willing to befriend them, his mother is horrified to have been discovered by humans, so that it is "clear that they had brought on a real calamity" (77). We soon learn that Terak and his family come from "Somewhere in the East" (78). Members of a community of giants completely cut off from humankind, their discovery by humans ended in tragedy. The human explorers had tricked Terak's father by offering him presents ("an embroidered cloak, a turban with a peacock's feather sticking up at the front, a box of blue beads" [80]) and alcohol, and asking him to be their king. The family were taken to England, and the father was displayed in a circus where, on the first night, "he died of their laughter" (81). The suffering of Terak's family thus follows a familiar and rather simplistic trajectory of colonial exploitation. The offering of cheap gifts such as beads to the innocent natives appears a direct reference to colonial practices. The incident also recalls the legitimate fear of the Lilliputians in *Mistress Masham's Repose* that they will be displayed as a curiosity for British audiences,

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<sup>4</sup> In *The Chimneys of Green Knowe* (1958), for example, one of the historical characters is a black page who was formerly a slave.

as well as the Professor's fantasy of displaying a "Brobdingnagian" to audiences for scientific purposes. It also recalls the real history of human zoos and of such figures as Sara Baartman who were put on display for European audiences. Sadiah Qureshi even describes the popularity in 1850s Britain of an exhibit featuring two San Salvadorians, Maximo and Bartola, who were presented as the "Aztec Lilliputians," a name which suggests that imperial literature provided a framework for viewing the individuals put on display as sub-human and even fantastical creatures (Qureshi 76, 128). Of the three children, it is the relatively secure Ida who feels particularly guilty for keeping Terak's existence a secret from her aunt, as she is aware that this discovery would prove Dr Biggin's theories. Ping and Oskar, both of whom have experience of displacement and exile are happy enough to keep the secret, as they know that Terak could not benefit from this situation ("they don't send Displaced Persons home. They put them in camps. They might even put them in a Zoo" [87]), but agree to let Aunt Maud find a giant's tooth as a compromise. In the event, Aunt Maud's theories about prehistoric giants are dismissed by the scientific community, so that Terak and his mother stand in no danger from her, but the incident suggests a discomfort with aspects of colonial history, linked to an awareness of the ways in which scientific knowledge was wielded to exert violence upon native subjects.

However, the book ends as Terak, who has discovered that, despite his father's experience, he enjoys being laughed at, fulfils an ambition to be a circus clown. Though the children enjoy the circus performance, a note of unease is introduced as Dr Biggin's friend Miss Sybilla refuses to attend because she cannot bear to see "a horrid man bullying the poor helpless tigers" and Oskar, agreeing, thinks that "the tigers stood for his fearless father, overpowered, imprisoned, and angry" (111). As in *Mistress Masham's Repose*, *The River at Green Knowe* appears unable to suggest a solution to past wrongs other than that the same set of imperial relations be carried out on more genial terms (Terak consents to being put on display and laughed at, just as the Lilliputians consent to becoming a feature of the Malplaquet gardens).

In both Boston and White's books, the imperial past is invoked through living beings, the giants and the Lilliputians. However, that past is also present in the physical objects that furnish the houses. Despite the focus on the local history of the Oldknow family, the objects that fill Green Knowe and its grounds are gathered from across the world. The garden of the

house, as we will later find out, contains a bamboo grove. We learn that Tolly's ancestor, Captain Oldknow, "sailed all over the world [and] used to bring home presents for the family" (CGK 31). Throughout the series, the house is found to hold a number of remarkable artefacts from other countries, including a Japanese mouse, a Chinese silk lantern, box, and teacups (SGK 67–68), as well as Russian dolls. As Valerie Krips demonstrates, the study of heritage during the post-war period was increasingly concerned with material culture, and the focus on household objects in the Green Knowe books reflects this shift (95). The titular house of Penelope Lively's later fantasy *The House in Norham Gardens* is very different from Green Knowe (it is not a country house but rather an ugly nineteenth-century building in Oxford), but it too is home to objects from across the world and to a long imperial heritage. The text constantly draws our attention to this fact—the book's opening paragraph describes the house and others like it as "reek[ing] of hymns and the Empire, Mafeking and the Khyber Pass". Clare Mayfield's family have "[Basuto] spears on their walls instead of pictures" (7), and attics filled with objects collected from across the empire by Clare's great-grandfather, an anthropologist. Clare's obsession with preserving these items is based in a belief that "if you keep things you can go on being sure about what's happened to you" (12); in other words, she believes that history and memory, as well as individual identity, are preserved through objects. The house itself has remained unchanged even as those on either side of it have been modernised and converted. Clare herself jokes about the house's resemblance to "the period rooms of a museum of everyday life"; she invites her friend Liz to "'Step back into the past [...] In this house we preserve an older, finer way of life. Welcome to nineteen thirty-six'" (29). For Anthony Purdy, the house is really:

two museums in one, bearing witness to its two presiding geniuses: on the one hand, the domestic furnishings and decoration of her great-grandmother, so many 'shadows of another world and another time'; and, on the other, the spears and shields and masks that adorn the walls, anthropological artifacts from her great-grandfather's expeditions. (37)

These two legacies are tied together here because they occupy the same space of the house, and because Clare must negotiate the pasts invoked by both. The main action of the book is concerned with a tamburan from New Guinea, which Clare discovers in her attic, and about which she soon begins to have strange dreams. Like all of the colonial artefacts in the family home, the tamburan is stored alongside other, more domestic items. Clare finds it in the junk room among trunks filled with her grandmother's clothes, spare blankets, and old hats and reflects that "in absolutely no other house, could you open an old trunk and be confronted

with a large bundle of bows and arrows [and] what looked like a set of very moth-eaten feather dusters and a lot of old coconut matting and a weird-looking slab of wood with some kind of a picture on it” (13).

Both Purdy and Lively herself suggest that there exists an incongruity between these objects from “queer places” (14) and the domestic objects around them. However, the imperial presence in the home was not restricted to exotic artefacts like those mentioned here. As Deirdre David shows, the essential products of the Victorian upper-class domestic household, for example the fabrics with which homes were furnished, were frequently manufactured in the colonies. Even more indirectly, as Joanna de Groot shows, “consumer products like textiles, soap and clothing since the nineteenth century or bicycle and car tyres in the twentieth century made extensive use of materials produced in colonial settings (Indian and Egyptian cotton, Australian and South African wool, West African palm oil, Malaysian rubber)” (de Groot 169)—thus even those household goods which were manufactured within Britain were reliant upon the Empire for resources. What de Groot and David thus suggest is an economy in which “the existence of Victorian domesticity and Victorian empire in a compounded, mutually reinforcing relationship is clear” (David 571). At the most basic levels, domestic material culture in the metropole was dependent upon the empire.

The issue of material dependency is one that is central to Mary Norton’s *The Borrowers* (1952). In Norton’s book and its sequels, the borrowers are tiny, humanoid creatures who prefer to live in houses “which are old and quiet and deep in the country” (7) and sustain themselves by stealing small objects from the human beings who have built these houses and who unknowingly share these spaces with them. We are told,

They thought human beings were just invented to do the dirty work—great slaves put there for them to use. At least, that’s what they told each other. But my brother said that, underneath, he thought they were frightened. (7)

Andrew O’Malley links the borrowers’ dependence on the human world with that of the child on the adult world, and as I will show, there are other reasons to connect the borrowers with the human children whom they meet. However, as the quotation above demonstrates, the relationship may easily be read to reflect the dependence of the metropole upon the empire. The borrowers believe that “human beans are for borrowers—like bread’s for butter” (71); the right of the borrower to exploit the human world as a resource is unquestioned, to the extent

that humans themselves appear as little more than a resource. Arrietty, the borrower protagonist of this book, has difficulty in accepting the full humanity of the “human beans,” while, as quoted above, Mrs May compares the status of humans within the borrower world-view to that of slaves. At the same time, the borrowers display great anxiety over their dependence upon this resource, worrying that when humans leave a house, the borrowers who live there are “done for.”

If the borrowers are materially and economically dependent on humans for their survival, we see that they are also culturally dependent on humans as well. This is made clear in Norton’s descriptions of the spaces in which Arrietty, and her parents Pod and Homily live. Homily is “proud” of her sitting room, which includes a fireplace, portraits of Queen Victoria made by hanging up stolen stamps, a padded lacquer box for a sofa, a table with a red velvet cloth, and a library of miniature books (12–13). There is an undercurrent of unease to be seen when Homily deprecates her own dependence on human-made objects such as toy tea-cups (“Your uncle Hendreary never drank a thing that wasn’t out of a common acorn cup, and he’s lived to a ripe old age and had the strength to emigrate” [19–20]), but despite this it is clear that her aim is to make the house as similar to a human (and British) home as possible. Later in the book, as the human boy befriends the family and begins to bring them human-made items from the doll’s house upstairs, “Homily’s house pride swells to almost corrupting proportions” (Kuznets 200). Items such as doll-sized cupboards and chairs may serve a purpose, but the borrowers also obtain from the doll’s house such objects as “a bird in a cage—not a real one, of course” and “a dish of plaster tarts and an imitation leg of mutton” (112). These items—along with the toy piano and potted palm (114) which the family subsequently acquire can serve no purpose other than to imitate human rituals. Yet this superficial imitation of human life is not merely a flaw in Homily, but seems a wider part of borrower culture. In *The Borrowers Afield*, at the celebratory family meal where Pod, Homily and Arrietty are reunited with their cousins, Norton describes a dinner table that holds “every kind of dish and preserve—both real and false” (179), including the abovementioned plaster tarts and imitation leg of mutton.

Andrew O’Malley argues convincingly that, in representing the culture of the borrowers as being entirely derivative of that of the humans, Norton is playing into nineteenth-century narratives of class, which suggested that the working class was unable to

“generate its own knowledge and culture” (80). However, while Homily’s particular concerns with regard to the furnishing of her home do reflect particular class aspirations, it is important also to note that the borrowed cultural artefacts mentioned by Norton are often objects which are directly linked with (and representative of) empire. As quoted above, the Clock family living room contains several framed postage stamps to imitate portraits of the queen, while Arrietty herself sleeps in a bed made of cigar boxes, with “Flor De Havana” emblazoned upon the roof.<sup>5</sup> These connections to the material culture of empires suggest that a more plausible reading is one which links the borrowers’ not entirely successful attempts to replicate the culture of the humans with similar attempts on the part of colonial subjects to imitate British culture.

Anindyo Roy draws attention to the hybrid figure of the educated Indian “baboo”, seen in several imperial texts, including Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* and F. Anstey’s parody *Baboo Jabberjee*:

Embodied in the *baboo*, the Western educated colonial counterpart of the Victorian gentleman, this abnormal hybridity had to be acknowledged, at some level, as a historically inevitable condition [...] However, equally powerful was the need to ensure that this historical inevitability did not jeopardize the existing relations of power between the colonial authorities and native subjects. As a consequence, the baboo had to be represented as “un-civil” subject: whether employed as a native clerk or a petty government official, he was produced endlessly as a caricature of the “original”. (Roy, 4)

As Roy shows, the necessity of representing the baboo as an “un-civil” subject led to the figure’s being parodied endlessly, particularly with reference to the character’s use of the English language. Imperial children’s literature features several such educated characters from the colonies, who recognise England as a cultural centre and whose attempts to mimic English behaviour are, like Roy’s baboos, betrayed by a failure to grasp the language—prominent among these are Frank Richards’s Hurree Jumset Ram Singh and Ransome’s Misse Lee (discussed in more detail in Chapter One). In *The Borrowers*, Homily in particular serves as such a comic figure, due to her obsession with a particular form of domestic civility and its incongruity with her real situation—her anxiety over such details as the proper pronunciation

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<sup>5</sup> Though Cuba was only briefly a British colony, the production of tobacco is intimately linked with histories of European colonisation and the slave trade.

of “parquet” suggests that she at least is aware that it is language that may mark her as an uncivil subject. The borrowers’ difficulties with language also have implications in relation to the book’s status as a children’s book. Maria Nikolajeva suggests that part of the appeal of children’s fantasies that involve miniature people or animated toys is that “the use of such characters empowers the readers” (“Development” 55), since the child is usually in a position of superiority with regard to these characters. The child reader of Norton’s books is invited to notice the borrowers’ small size and limited knowledge of the wider world (as displayed in Arrietty’s first encounter with the boy), as well as such linguistic misunderstandings as “human beans.” Such a reader may be empowered by the knowledge that they possess a superior understanding of the world to Arrietty’s own, even though, as Caroline Hunt notes, the reader is also invited to identify with the borrowers (123). However, the child *characters* in the series are also often linked, rather than defined as superior, to the borrowers. Arrietty befriends the human boy in the first book, and another young boy, Tom Goodenough, in *The Borrowers Afield*, and in the first book in particular, the child characters are shown to be very much at the mercy of the adults—the human boy is unable to stop the cook and gardener from destroying the borrowers’ home, and is locked up for several days.

Language is central to Arrietty’s relationship with the boy in *The Borrowers*, and is here linked to the fact of empire. The boy who befriends the Clock family has grown up in India and his inability to read in English is attributed to this fact. “Well, if you’re born in India, you’re bilingual. And if you’re bilingual, you can’t read. Not so well” (63). The boy may have more knowledge of the human world than Arrietty, but a childhood spent outside the country still positions him as a cultural outsider in crucial ways. Arrietty’s superior grasp of language (she is a fluent reader) gives her the power to bargain with the boy; but her understanding, both of English and of the world outside this house, is also incomplete. This is made particularly clear through names and naming. Throughout the book, the humans are referred to as “human beans”, which appears to be the result of mishearing. Mrs May, the frame narrator of the book, suggests not just that even the borrowers’ own names are the result of mimicking human culture, but that they are the result of *imperfect* mimicry:

Even their names were never quite right. They imagined they had their own names—quite different from human names—but with half an ear you could tell they were borrowed. Even Uncle Hendreary’s and Eggletina’s. Everything they had was borrowed; they had nothing of their own at all. Nothing. (6–7)



The text thus claims that the borrowers only “imagine” that they have their own names; rather than constructing them as a race with a language of its own or ascribing any validity to their variations on the existing English words, Norton implies that they lack control of the language which they use to refer to themselves. The text thus draws attention to the borrowers’ inability to be civilised English subjects precisely through their attempts to mimic that state. They are, as Bhabha puts it, “the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English” (*Location* 125). A shared lack of control over language and culture, then, is one of the things that links the borrowers with the boy. Both are presented as outsiders to the cultures which they inhabit. Mrs May even suggests, early on in the book, that the ease with which her brother was able to see these creatures is in some way linked with a shared connection to colonial space: “there was something about him—perhaps because we were brought up in India among mystery and magic and legend—something that made us think that he saw things that other people could not see” (5). The boy himself connects Arrietty with creatures he has encountered in India (62).

In *The Borrowers Afield*, Kate, the child mentioned in the frame narrative of *The Borrowers*, travels with Mrs May to a country inn near Firbank Hall, which is revealed to be the country house that had been the setting for the earlier book. She is excited about her first visit to an inn:

An inn, of course, was a place you came to at night, not at three o’clock in the afternoon, preferably a rainy night—wind, too, if it could be managed; and it should, of course, be situated on a moor (“bleak”, Kate knew, was the adjective here). And there should be scullions; mine host should be gravy-stained and broad in the beam with a tousled apron pulled across his stomach [...] And there should be some sort of cauldron, Kate felt, somewhere about—and a couple of mastiffs, perhaps, thrown in for good measure. (13)

Naturally, Kate is disappointed by what she finds—the inn is much more ordinary than the one she has imagined. Coming from London to the countryside, Kate too reveals herself to be a cultural outsider, encountering a landscape which she recognises only through literary sources. The children and the borrowers are once again linked together as outsiders to the adult, human, English world, and thus are unable to wield cultural knowledge fully. Kate appears as one of the deracinated child protagonists described by Cosslett; her position in this scene mirrors that of the colonial who “knows” the metropole only through literature.

Kate's disappointment in the inn may also be connected to a nostalgia for an ideal past identified by both O'Malley and Caroline Hunt (O'Malley 71). O'Malley sees this past as essentially a pre-industrial one in its ordering of social relations, and sees the difference between the inn of Kate's imagination and the book's reality as a sign that "Modern reality is characterized by falsity and artificiality; gone is the 'real' and genuine warmth of Norton's/Kate's fantasized past" (74). This nostalgia for a pre-industrial past has been discussed in detail in earlier chapters of this thesis. However, in this case, Kate's fantasy of the inn is portrayed as comical—and moreover, is acknowledged within the text as fantastical. More serious is the portrayal of the decay into which the society of the borrowers has fallen, and this is directly linked to the decline of the country house. We are told that in the past, several families of borrowers were able to live in the big house; as the house has declined, these families have been forced to "emigrate" (*TB* 24). Arrietty mistakenly believes that the human race is dying out (67), but is soon forced to worry that borrowers themselves will soon cease to exist and takes steps to "save the race" (100) by attempting to contact other families. While in subsequent books the family will discover that other borrowers still exist, the portrayal across the series is still that of a society in decline. Mrs May's account of the borrowers at the beginning of the book confirms this; each generation of borrowers "had become smaller and smaller" (7), and she questions whether they may still exist. Meanwhile, by *The Borrowers Afield*, Firbank Hall has been turned into a school (16) and has been physically transformed. The society presented by the country house is entirely at an end. Rather than mere nostalgia for a more picturesque past, the series as a whole acknowledges the impossibility of a future for such houses and the social structures they represent. The resources upon which the borrowers have depended for centuries no longer exist, and nor do the social structures that sustained them. Victor Watson describes *The Borrowers* as "an elegiac story of loss of hope" (*Reading Series Fiction* 120). While Watson notes the recurrence of the themes of "loneliness and longing" (133) through the later books in the series, in this first book in particular, the decline, both of the borrowers and of the human society that made their existence possible, is tied up in the decline of the country house. As I have already shown, the country house, empire, and Englishness were closely linked concepts during this post-war period, so that the melancholy that Watson identifies is in this case a postimperial phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> Borrower society is, in short, in a position analogous to that of

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<sup>6</sup> It should be specified that this is not the "postimperial melancholia" described by Paul Gilroy and discussed in the conclusion to this thesis. Rather, it bears a closer resemblance to the "dignified sadness" associated with imperial decline which for Gilroy has its roots in the nineteenth century (*After Empire* 98).

Britain after empire—mingled with the sense of longing for the past is the recognition that the resources which made that past possible are no longer available, and that only through radical change can they survive.

A similar anxiety over the decline of a civilisation is visible in Lucy Boston's *A Stranger at Green Knowe* (1961), in an episode where a group of visitors to the house discuss contemporary racial and cultural relations:

“Chimps are supposed to be Aryan cousins. Would you say the same thing about the African and white races—that the Africans are up and coming and the whites going, going, gone?”

“I almost think I would,” said the only man present. “In our big cities there is nothing at all not made by ourselves except the air. We are our own context and live by ourselves picking each other's brains. There's no vital force. Electronic Man.” (88–89)

The conversation quoted above marks a strange interlude in the book and, in its references to evolution and declining “life force,” as well as its equivalence between racial politics and animals, seems closer to late Victorian narratives of decline than to mid-twentieth century discourse. As in *The Borrowers*, cultural decline is connected here with material dependence and changing modes of production (“there is nothing at all not made by ourselves except the air”), but here it is also explicitly linked to race. This particular exchange is significant in the context of a book which is about the presence of two “outsiders” within Britain, and the question of whether they can find a home here. *A Stranger at Green Knowe* tells the story of Ping, an orphaned young Chinese refugee who had previously appeared in *The River at Green Knowe* (1959) and who is invited to spend the holidays with Mrs Oldknow. On a trip to the zoo, Ping has seen and formed a connection with Hanno, a gorilla, as they have both been forcibly stripped of their homes (42–43).<sup>7</sup> When Hanno escapes from the zoo, he, like Ping, finds refuge in the grounds of Green Knowe, where Ping attempts to protect him. In Hanno's case, this refuge can only be temporary, as Mrs Oldknow explains: “There's no forest for Hanno, poor splendid thing. Only a tight little urban overbuilt England” (162). Ping, however, is invited to make Green Knowe his permanent home.

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<sup>7</sup> Boston's choice to depict the plight of a non-white refugee by comparing him to a zoo animal is unfortunate to say the least.

*A Stranger at Green Knowe* (and indeed most of the books discussed in this chapter) was published in the context of unprecedented levels of mass migration from the Commonwealth to Britain in the wake of the Second World War. This increase in immigration to Britain reached its peak in 1961, the year in which *A Stranger at Green Knowe* was published (Webster 123). As Wendy Webster notes, in the first half of the twentieth century, traffic between the empire and the metropole had consisted in the main of white British travellers. Travel between Britain and the dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada “was often viewed as internal migration,” and many Australian migrants characterised the journey to Britain as “going home” (Webster 122–123). The period after 1945 was the first time when Commonwealth immigrants “were not associated with Australians or other white Commonwealth migrants but with black and Asian people living in Britain” (123). Racial difference, then, became an important distinguishing feature in the construction of the immigrant. The domestic space of the British home also took on new meaning in the wake of this wave of immigration. In his work on mid-century Black British writing, James Procter refers to “a much larger body of writing to appear in the 1950s and early 1960s to evoke a black presence *through* the dwelling place” (22), as housing shortages in the post-war period contributed to the establishment of the dwelling place as a site in which national and racial tensions were played out. Procter draws attention to the general image of squalor and dereliction that came to be associated by white British writers with the black dwelling place at this time. In the context of a growing non-white population within the nation’s borders, voices like Enoch Powell’s were attempting to shift the location of national identity from place to race, as Ian Baucom describes (14). The home remained central to this rhetoric—as Procter notes, Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” speech in 1968 “imagined the threat posed to the nation by immigration in terms of the invasion and desecration of a seven-roomed house in the Midlands” (25).

It’s significant, then, that several of these works of children’s fantasy should feature immigrant characters being accepted into the home and community. The three children who are introduced to the house in Lucy Boston’s *The River at Green Knowe* (Ida, the great-niece of Dr Maud Biggin, and Oskar and Ping, from “The Society for the Promotion of Summer Holidays for Displaced Children”) spend much of their time in exploring and mapping the river. As in the case of the *Swallows and Amazons* books, discussed earlier, the children overlay the territory of this section of English countryside with an imaginative one of their own—Ping, in particular, populates the river with “crocodiles or hippopotamuses” (14) and

tigers (28). He and Oskar also project their own experiences upon the local wildlife—an unwanted baby swan rescued by the children is referred to as a “Displaced Cygnet” (17). In this way these immigrant children are able to transform and personalise the British landscape to reflect their own needs and situation.

Ping’s real acceptance into the house, however, occurs in the next book in the series, *A Stranger at Green Knowe*, when he is invited there by Mrs Oldknow herself. Almost his first experience of the house on this second visit is to be served tea in “thin blue cups without handles, patterned with oval windows the size of rice grains, through which the light shone when they were held up” (67–68). The cups are identical to cups he remembers from his childhood. Mrs Oldknow suggests that some power in the house has led to its always containing “all the things that are waiting specially for you” (68). Mrs Oldknow has already attempted to make him feel at home by placing a big Chinese lantern by his bedroom door (66). Later in the book, as Ping plays among the bamboo, she remarks on “how right you make the bamboo look!” (81). Ping’s ability to enter into the life of Green Knowe is therefore directly connected here to the material traces of Chinese culture that are already present within the house and its grounds. Describing the experiences of immigrants who arrived in Britain in the post-war period, Stuart Hall argues that that they were coming home to a place where they had already had a symbolic presence for centuries:

People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries; symbolically we have been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantation that rotted generations of English children’s teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. Because they don’t grow it in Lancashire, you know. Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolization of English identity—I mean, what does anybody in the world know about an English person except that they can’t get through the day without a cup of tea?

Where does it come from? Ceylon—Sri Lanka, India. That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history. (S. Hall 48–49)

The flow of material goods to imperial Britain from other parts of the world has thus meant that the empire has always been present in domestic British space. Similarly, Wendy Webster

points out that a popular slogan in the 1960s used by campaigners against controls on commonwealth migration was “We’re here because you were there”; emphasising the historical links between these new non-white migrants and Britain’s imperial past, and using that history to legitimise their presence (125). It should be noted that Ping’s own status as a colonial subject is far from clear—he is originally introduced as merely “a slim nine-year-old with an Asiatic face” (*RGK* 8), and though he is described as Chinese in *A Stranger at Green Knowe*, the reader is afforded very little information about the political circumstances that caused his family home to be burnt and that made him a refugee. In any case, although mainland China was never under British political rule, the cultural and economic legacies of empire have forged a link between those nations, as evinced by the material objects in the house, as well as Ping’s own fluency in English (which gives him an advantage among the other refugees in the novel). In a very real sense, then, there is already a place for Ping at Green Knowe and, by implication, in England.

Penelope Lively’s *The House in Norham Gardens* presents a further development of this theme of immigration from the former colonies, and situates itself in an England where the presence of a large immigrant population is both an accepted reality and a part of the public discourse. The building next door to the titular house in Lively’s novel has already been converted into student lodgings and “swarmed with students [...] American, French, Chinese” (18), and the characters are shown to be aware of contemporary debates around empire and immigration. Clare has a teacher who “voted Labour and became heated about South Africa and Enoch Powell and Rhodesia” (47). It is in this context that Clare befriends John Sempebwa, a university student from Uganda who is later accepted into the house as a lodger. John is an anthropologist working on the Baganda, and like Ping he may well find familiar objects within the house—early in the book we are told that “yellowing articles with titles like ‘Kinship Structure among the Baganda’” are to be found in the library (7). Like Ping, John is accepted into the house and the heritage that it represents, even as the presence of such pieces of colonial history confirms that he had already been symbolically present. Conversely, John and Ping are also both able to enter these English houses in large part because of the Anglocentric education that is a legacy of colonialism, and which, according to Gauri Viswanathan, had been developed in the colonies as a “strategy of containment” (10). John alludes directly to this, when he explains that he went to a school where “our English master had a firm belief in culture. Your culture” (96–97). Ping, as I have mentioned, is one

of the few refugee children to speak English, and finds that this gives him some advantages over his peers.

However, both books suggest that the acceptance of these characters into the home and society is contextual and may be compromised. Both characters initially are excluded from British homes—Ping explains that he has not been taken in by a family yet because “everyone asks for Hungarians” (74), while John Sempebwa hints at the increased difficulty he faces in finding lodgings as a black man. Further, rather like the “displaced” characters of *The River at Green Knowe* (and the “deracinated” protagonists of the time-slip novel), John jokes that he is a “detrribalised African” and that such a figure can be “useful” (HNG 62); he jokingly asks Clare whether she would “like to hear about my relationship with my deceased aunt’s husband?” (62), thus positioning himself simultaneously as an anthropologist and a subject for anthropology. In order to become settled at Green Knowe, Ping even has to give up his own name. The reader never learns Ping’s full name; we are told that his first name is Hsu (RGK 9), but as the children find it hard to pronounce they, and the text, refer to him as Ping throughout.<sup>8</sup> And while both of the “Displaced Children” in *The River at Green Knowe* are able to find homes by the end of the novel, Terak the giant is, like his father, working as a clown in a circus. Terak’s choice to do this is presented as voluntary, but the only options available to him are hiding forever or presenting his racial difference to the British public for mockery. In Boston and Lively’s books, as in *Mistress Masham’s Repose*, the acceptance of colonial subjects and racial others within the British home is thus contingent upon their continued performance of their roles within larger imperial and racial structures.

However, in addition to absorbing immigrants and citizens of former colonies into a broader national narrative, these texts also suggest an altered identity for the postimperial white British characters. In *The Borrowers*, the presence of the human boy in the country house is connected to his Indian roots. We learn that “the first time he came home from India he got rheumatic fever. He missed a whole term at school and was sent away to the country to get over it” (5). This is an interesting reversal of a trope prevalent in imperial children’s literature in which child characters are sent “home” from the colonies precisely because those climates are considered detrimental to the child’s health. For example, as Clare Bradford

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<sup>8</sup> Ping shares the experience of being renamed for the ease of his English hosts with another refugee character in a contemporary fantasy novel. The eponymous hero of Michael Bond’s *A Bear Called Paddington* (1958) is given his English name after the reader learns that no one can understand his Peruvian name.

notes, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), India is seen as "a space marked by disorder, danger and sickness, so that Mary's return to Britain restores her to physical and psychic health" (196). Though Mrs May speaks of the boy's coming "home from India", *The Borrowers* suggests the possibility of a hybrid identity for the British child born in, and *at home* in India—an identity at which the boy himself hints when he describes himself as "bilingual"—so that the return to Britain and the loss of India may be the cause, rather than the cure, for sickness. Just as Ping and Oskar alter the landscape around Green Knowe and the foreign students alter the character of Penelope Lively's Oxford, we see here the possibility of a new, *hybrid*, identity for the British subject after empire. Furthermore, in revealing the imperial histories that have produced these domestic spaces, the books discussed here reveal that the space of the British home is itself already a hybrid one.

## 5.2 The Home and the Secondary World

In C.S. Lewis's Narnia books, as I've discussed, the portal to the secondary fantasy world is located within the home—it is via the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the attic in *The Magician's Nephew*, and the back bedroom in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* that the characters are drawn into the fantastic other space—and in an act of inversion, the Magician's house in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* contains a window into our own world in the form of the Magician's Book. The novels which I examine in this section continue to place the boundaries between the primary and secondary worlds within domestic spaces but, as I will show, the relationship between the two worlds undergoes a drastic change in these later portal fantasies. I offer a symptomatic reading of this in terms of the postimperial context in which these texts were published.

As I have already noted, the fantasies of the 1960s and 1970s are strongly influenced by the work of Tolkien and Lewis. This is certainly the case with Alan Garner's *Elidor* (1965), the plot of which recalls that of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in several particulars. *Elidor* features a secondary world that has been turned into a desolate wasteland by an evil force. Into this fantasy land, also named Elidor, a family of four siblings are transported, who, it is prophesied, will complete a quest and save the land. Roland, the youngest of the siblings, feels a particular affinity with the country, much like that of Lewis's Lucy. It is unsurprising therefore that the book has often been read, as Neil Philip notes, in the context of the Narnia books (45). In many respects, *Elidor* imitates the form of the classic



portal-quest fantasy; the child meets a wise mentor figure, who explains the situation in the secondary world, as well as the child's own role in its salvation, and whose interpretation of events the child protagonist readily accepts. In this case, the children's quest involves retrieving and then guarding four magical objects—a cup, a spear, a stone, and a sword—and in this respect too it does not stray far from the traditional fantasy quest. Roland's entry into the world of Elidor in particular appears to be a direct reference to the beginning of Lewis's *Prince Caspian*; in both books the children find themselves without warning on an islet between the sea and a ruined castle. As in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the salvation of Elidor rests upon a sacrifice.

However, there are significant differences in the treatment of these tropes. The Watson children themselves are middle-class and live in a small suburban house to which they move at the beginning of the novel. The map which leads them to Elidor is a mechanical street map (9–10), from which the children choose their destination at random. The initial portal into the other world is found in an old church—but one scheduled for demolition, in a partly demolished Manchester slum. Even Roland, the youngest of the children and the one with the strongest feeling for Elidor, is aware of the incongruity in seeing himself as the saviour of a world. (“And only I can do it. He says so. He says I can bring it all back. Roland Watson, Fog Lane, Manchester 20. What about that? Now what about that!” [37]). The treasures of Elidor transform to rubbish when brought to the children's world. In a sharp contrast to Aslan's willing sacrifice, Elidor is saved (if indeed it is saved at all) by the killing of a terrified animal. Overall, then, neither the fantasy world nor the quest is ever shown to be glorious. This is clearest in the section of the novel that is set in Elidor itself.

Specifically, this is illustrated through the depiction of landscape. As I demonstrate in the previous chapter, the protagonist of the British children's fantasy novel often gazes upon the landscape of the secondary world from what Elleke Boehmer describes in a colonial context as the “high vantage-point” or “knowledgeable position” (68), or what Mary Louise Pratt calls “the monarch of all I survey scene” (Pratt 7). Farah Mendlesohn notes that, in the world-building process of traditional portal-quest fantasy, “[n]onspecific landscape is unrolled like a carpet in front of the character [and] even embraces the contrived design of Romantic landscape painting” (*Rhetorics* 13). *Elidor* marks a drastic departure from this tradition. Far

from offering itself for the British child to map and know, the landscape of Elidor, as Roland experiences it, leaves him entirely disoriented:

Within the forest the road dwindled to a line of mud that strayed wherever there was ground to take it: fungus glowed in the twilight, and moss trailed like hair from the branches. [...] Oaks became black water at a touch. Roland could not tell how long he had struggled, nor how far, when the trees thinned on to moorland below a skyline of rock. The forest held neither hours or miles, and all that he had been able to do was wade from one bog into the next, to climb over one rotting trunk to the next, and hope for an end to the slime. (27–28)

As the above quotation demonstrates, the landscape of Elidor is mutable and unknowable. Things are not what they appear (“moss trailed like hair,” “Oaks became water”), and Roland cannot access concrete markers of space or time like roads, miles and hours. Soon he will find himself in the presence of a ring of standing stones which cannot be counted. At no point then is the reader given a clear sense of Elidor’s landscape. In earlier chapters of this thesis I suggest that one of the functions fulfilled by the fantastic secondary world is to provide the imperialist fantasy of a knowable and mappable space, at a moment when the real world can no longer offer such spaces. *Elidor* suggests that even such a fantasy is no longer possible.

In addition to rendering its fantasy landscape unknowable, *Elidor* also casts doubt upon the other sources of information that are traditionally made available to the traveller to a secondary world. The prophecy by which Roland and his siblings are foretold to save the secondary world is revealed to have been reconstructed from “the confused fragments of a dream” by “a ploughboy [...] given to fits” and “through the years it has been read only for its nonsense” (49) and neither the children nor their guide, Malebron, can be sure of the effects of their actions. According to Mendlesohn, “almost all portal and quest fantasies use the figure of a guide to download information into the text” (*Rhetorics* 13). Malebron, the wounded fiddler who draws the children into Elidor and who tells Roland what he must do in order to rescue his siblings, fulfils some of this purpose. The conventions of the genre, as Mendlesohn explains them, suggest that Malebron will be a reliable source of information. However, his very name suggests that he may not be benevolent or trustworthy; and as the children themselves recognise, he is very willing to send them into danger to fulfil his own ends. Far from providing Roland with information about Elidor that the child can process (or, indeed, answering any of Roland’s questions), he is “egotistical, unyielding, almost psychotic.

His sentences, liberally scattered with exclamation marks, are almost always commands” (Philip 50). Garner himself connected Malebron’s exhortations to those of Pozzo towards Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* (50–51).

Neil Philip quotes Garner’s claim that he deliberately rewrote Malebron’s interactions with Roland in order to make them more, rather than less, discomfiting to the reader: “I had to take the warmth out of the meeting and put in manipulation and fear” (Philip, 50).

Intriguingly, he claims that the decision to reframe this relationship, between the British boy/saviour and the native guide character, came after Garner had watched a 1964 production of Peter Shaffer’s *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*:

At the centre of the play is an ambiguous, fraught relationship between the representatives of two cultures, Atahualpa king of the Incas and Pizarro his conqueror, who seem at times identified with each other, at times mirror images of each other, and at times father and son, son and father. (51)

Philip states, in effect, that this relationship between a British child protagonist and the hero of the secondary fantasy world was remodelled upon the fraught relationship between a coloniser and the last ruler of a conquered land. This comparison positions the land of Elidor as analogous to a colonised space. Yet, rather than rendering that space legible or allowing the child protagonists to explore, map, or fix their understanding of its inhabitants, *Elidor* depicts this space as unreadable and unknowable, as is Malebron, the only resident of the world whom they meet.

This is not the only major departure that *Elidor* makes from the portal-fantasy structure. While the action of most portal fantasies takes place in the secondary world, the major part of this novel is set in our world, as the children attempt to hide the “treasures,” all the while resisting the intrusion of a threatening force from the secondary world. The children cannot escape their responsibility for the fate of Elidor; Malebron has warned them that the two worlds are connected, so that “the death of Elidor would not be without its echo in your world” (42). In previous chapters, I argue that the form of the portal fantasy is derived from the imperial adventure novel, and that it adopts that genre’s assumptions about the hierarchy of spaces and the direction of travel. *Elidor* undermines those assumptions by insisting that travel between the worlds need not be unidirectional. Both in the family’s old house and the new one, the presence of the treasures triggers a series of supernatural phenomena—electric

appliances begin to operate of their own accord, and the shadows of men are seen around the house, and in the attic and garden. As the narrative progresses, these intrusions begin to seem more concrete, and concentrate, significantly, around the front door of the house:

[Roland] snatched the curtain across and held it tightly in place. He heard a slight movement, and the door knob was turned both ways, and the door shifted against the Yale lock. He could hear breathing too. (99)

The portal, or point of contact between the two worlds, has thus shifted to the front door of a suburban house, and rather than entering the secondary world themselves, the children are forced to defend the primary world from the secondary world's encroachment. Thus, though *Elidor* imitates the form of the portal-quest Fantasy, it also contains within it elements of the Intrusion Fantasy, in which "the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back whence it came, or controlled" (Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics* 115). In a number of earlier children's fantasies, these acts of intrusion are presented as comic—for example, E. Nesbit's *The Phoenix and the Carpet*. Yet the majority of the examples Mendlesohn provides are literary works of horror—a concept to which I will return later in this chapter.

*Elidor* is not the only fantasy novel to thus complicate the relationship between the primary and secondary worlds in this period. The five books that make up Susan Cooper's Dark is Rising sequence, published between 1965 and 1977, are not, strictly, secondary world or portal fantasies. Over the course of the sequence (which tells of four children caught up in a larger battle between the forces of the Dark and the Light), the characters step out of the primary world on several occasions, and into other spaces as well as other times. Rather than relegating the supernatural to a single, defined secondary world, the books contain multiple fantastic spaces with shifting relationships with the primary world of the children. In her discussion of the books, Jane Suzanne Carroll uses the term "secondary world" to describe the "fantastic, supernatural" sphere as opposed to "the primary world of consensual reality" (26). Carroll's is a useful shorthand; however, it is important to note that none of these "other spaces" are fully realised worlds that have an existence outside the characters' immediate needs. The quest narrative often has the children (particularly Will Stanton) travelling into these fragmentary spaces in order to hide or retrieve significant artefacts, so that, as Butler notes, at times Will is merely using them as "a kind of safety-deposit box" (*Four British Fantasists* 64). As in the case of *Elidor*, the boundaries between the primary and secondary

worlds are permeable—the sequence contains several instances in which the fantastic intrudes into the domestic space and is experienced as a threat. In *Over Sea, Under Stone* (published, like *Elidor*, in 1965), the seemingly benevolent housekeeper Mrs Palk is discovered to be an agent of the Dark. More significant is a scene in *The Dark Is Rising* (1973), the second book in the same series, in which the Dark attempts to force its way into the home of Will Stanton.

For Carroll, the space of the home in children’s literature comprises a part of the “Sanctuary Topos”:

Like other sanctuaries, the domestic space is secured and distinguished from the rest of the world by a series of clearly delineated boundaries, causing it to stand “apart from the wilderness” and from the profane world [...] The rituals enacted on crossing the threshold of the domestic space serve to remind us that the borders of the home are also the borders between public and private, family and community, self and other.

(J.S. Carroll, 19)

Carroll’s suggestion that the borders of the home may stand in for other sorts of borders recalls Procter’s work, in which the domestic and national thresholds are conflated. Moreover, if we accept this understanding of the domestic space as fundamentally safe and standing apart from the outside (or profane) world, the breaching of the borders of the home then becomes an act of violation. It is unsurprising, then, that in both *The Dark Is Rising* and *Elidor*, the intrusive presence is expressed as horror rather than fantasy. Roland feels a “pulse of horror” (75) upon first seeing the shadows, while Will is overcome by fear:

The fear jumped at him for the third time like a great animal that had been waiting to spring. Will lay terrified, shaking, feeling himself shake, and yet unable to move. He felt he must be going mad. [...] horror seized him like a nightmare made real; there came a wrenching crash, with the howling of the wind suddenly much louder and closer, and a great blast of cold; and the Feeling came hurtling against him with such force of dread that it flung him cowering away. (26)

As Carroll notes, *The Dark is Rising* is the book in which “the boundaries of the sanctuary topos are consistently threatened and breached from without. Some of these irruptions are insidious, some overt and violent, but all [...] lead to the juxtaposition of the primary world with the secondary world” (36). The intrusion into Will’s home, described by the quotation above, comes by way of one of the house’s thresholds; after Will has placed sprigs of holly at all the other entrances to the Stanton farmhouse, the snow begins to come through the attic

skylight. Cooper continually draws the reader's attention to these "peripheral zones" within the Stanton family home; at other points in the novel, the snow breaks a downstairs window and seeps in under the door (41). The book's repeated focus on these peripheral zones or boundaries acts as a constant reminder that the boundaries of the domestic space are insecure and can be breached, and thus continually enforces the sense that the home is under threat.

In *Elidor*, the sense that the boundary between the home and the outside world is also the boundary between the primary and secondary worlds is even further emphasised. Earlier in the book, Roland has invoked his own front door in order to open the Mound of Vandwy. In doing so, he has further blurred the boundaries between the worlds, and has left his own home vulnerable: "And all this time Roland avoided using the front door. He felt that he could never trust the door to be the way out of and into the cottage" (93). In one of the book's eeriest moments, Roland witnesses an intruder from Elidor peering through the letterbox in the front door: "Without waiting for the knock, Roland drew back the curtain. The upright letterbox in the top of the door was open, and pressed close against it Roland saw an eye" (99). Whereas the imperial landscapes of the adventure novel and the portal fantasy offered themselves up to the reader's gaze, here, the secondary world gazes back.

In Penelope Farmer's *A Castle of Bone* (1972), the intrusion of the secondary world into the home is taken to an even further extreme. Like *Elidor*, *A Castle of Bone* shares superficial similarities of plot with Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. Farmer's novel has at its centre a magical cupboard, bought second-hand by the protagonist, Hugh.<sup>9</sup> The cupboard has magical properties—objects (and, the children discover, people) placed into it are transported in space or time. But the cupboard's magic also works upon objects in this world—items placed in it are transformed into the shape that they had originally held—for example, a woollen jumper is transformed into a pile of wool. In the opening pages of the book, the cupboard's supernatural properties manifest as a fantasy of intrusion, albeit a comic one—a pigskin wallet placed in the cupboard is transformed into a pig, which runs out of the house, "its tail uncurled by speed streaming out behind" (8). The cupboard is the portal between the worlds, yet long before Hugh physically enters it, it is already able to transport him, through a

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<sup>9</sup> Like the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the cupboard in *A Castle of Bone* is made of apple wood (96).

series of nightmares, to another space.<sup>10</sup> So unstable are the borders between the worlds that Hugh has no control over whether or not he wishes to pass between them. This lack of control is in some measure reflected in earlier portal fantasies—but whereas in the Narnia books, for example, the arrival in Narnia is something desired by the children, Hugh actively fights the cupboard’s effects (“the landscape sucked him in eventually; he had resisted it, clinging to his bedhead even” [107]). Even in his own bed, he is not safe. Eventually it is revealed that the “castle of bone” referred to by the book’s title is his own body. In breaching the boundaries of his home, the secondary world has breached Hugh’s own sense of self.

In her study of the works of Garner, Cooper, Lively and Diana Wynne Jones, C. Butler states that “one of the characteristic features of all four fantasists’ books is this sense that home is no longer a safe refuge” (*Four British Fantasists* 12). Drawing on Carole Scott’s work on Susan Cooper, Butler suggests that the recurrence of this theme is a result of these authors’ childhood experiences of the Second World War. British propaganda at the time of the war played a major role in creating a fear of domestic invasion, and books like *Elidor* and *The Dark is Rising* bear this out. Cooper herself endorses this interpretation of her work:

Indeed, as a child Susan Cooper, whose own father was a sergeant in the Home Guard and kept his rifle in the hall umbrella stand, was terrified of going to bed because she “knew there was a German paratrooper hiding in the wardrobe, or behind the door.” She later reworked that experience of fear in *The Dark Is Rising* by having the Dark attack Will with feelings of terror on the night before his eleventh birthday. “If the scene is ... effective,” she has written, “I owe it all to the illusory German paratrooper; to the war.” (*Four British Fantasists* 13)

Yet, as I show in the first half of this chapter, from the 1950s onwards there had been another cultural narrative of invasion focused on the British home, and whether or not Cooper is drawing deliberately on her “illusory German paratrooper,” her books also exist in this context. As Procter has shown, in much of the rhetoric around immigration, the thresholds of British homes were conflated with the national threshold. The policy of allowing easy immigration from Commonwealth countries was referred to as the “open door,” a phrase which also equated national and domestic borders (22). As has already been discussed,

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<sup>10</sup> The landscape of the secondary world in *A Castle of Bone* is similar to that of *Elidor*, full of trees that “seemed to be closing in on him” (15) and “melted from light to dark” (25); a sun that “gave no brightness” and the titular castle, whose “broken edges [...] were like teeth. They offered him a threat” (107).

“immigration” during this period generally referred to the arrival of non-white migrants, so that the threat of home invasion was also racialised. Procter notes that

It was at this domestic frontier that “the spectacle and trauma of a black/white encounter was most sensationally staged in accounts left over from this period. ‘One lady actually fainted when she opened the door and saw us!’ [...] ‘There are still landladies who scream and shut the door, and some who faint, at the sight of a Negro on the doorstep after dark’”. (22–23)

I have already mentioned Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” speech, which invokes the figure of an elderly woman whose house is under threat from black immigrants and who at one point “would have been attacked but for the chain on the door.” These “gendered doorstep encounters” (26), as Procter describes them, find a strange echo in an incident in Penelope Lively’s *The House in Norham Gardens*, a book whose stated attitudes towards immigration are very far from Powell’s.

In the book, Clare Mayfield’s conflicting feelings about a tamburan from New Guinea, acquired by her anthropologist great-grandfather in circumstances that Clare now understands to be unjust, lead to a series of dreams about the members of the tribe from whom it was taken. Clare’s dreams of “small brown men” are at first set in and around the native village, but then move to Oxford, so that the titular house is imagined as being besieged by the colonial other. One of these encounters even takes place on the house’s doorstep:

She had opened the front door and there’d been a man there, one of the small brown men, and she had had the impression that there were more of them beyond him, somewhere outside. His face had been a painted mask, the eyes and forehead white, the cheeks yellow, the mouth red-circled, and stripes running down from hairline to jaw. Bold, bright stripes. He had said nothing, but had stared at her, and all of a sudden she had been afraid. (50–51)

Later she imagines standing with her great-grandfather (“she noticed what a worried expression he had”) and listening to “a noise from somewhere outside—shrill, high-pitched chanting or singing—and she saw that the brown people were out there again, lots of them” (81). Clare’s anxiety over the tamburan and its history thus manifests itself in a sense that her home is under threat from “the brown people.” Though it is possible to read *The House in Norham Gardens* as a realist novel (Clare’s dreams can easily be given a rational



explanation), the irruption of the colonial other into her life suggests a connection with the intrusion fantasy.

In her discussion of the intrusion fantasy, Mendlesohn suggests that “whereas the portal-quest fantasy demands belief in the surface of the world, the intrusion fantasy requires faith in the *sub*-surface, the sense that there is always something lurking” (*Rhetorics* 116). The books I have discussed in this section take vastly different approaches to the concept of primary and secondary worlds. Of the four authors, only Garner creates a separate world, and as Neil Philip points out, he is more interested in “Elidor as an idea” than with the workings of the secondary world (Philip 46). Cooper creates a series of discrete fantastical spaces, while both Lively and Farmer present the secondary world as a manifestation of their protagonists’ subconscious. What these works have in common is their presentation of the *primary* world, and most notably the sanctuary space of the home, as fundamentally unsafe. The mysterious junk-shop owner in Farmer’s *A Castle of Bone* seems to endorse this view of the world: “What did you expect? What was I supposed to offer you? Continuity? Security? Immunity? Immunity from what?” (94). All of the books I have discussed in this section of the chapter share a sense of what Bhabha describes as the “unhomely”; the moment in which “the intimate recesses of the domestic space become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other” (*Location* 13). Lively’s novel offers us a clue as to the source of this unhomeliness. Upon Clare’s discovery of her great-grandfather’s diary, she reads his account of acquiring the tamburan and concludes that the tribe who gave it to him “didn’t quite understand who he was” (84), and that he had exploited this ignorance. Soon after she discovers the tamburan, she has a conversation with her great-aunts about the ways in which guilt and anxiety might manifest in the modern world:

“To the seventeenth-century mind ghosts were perfectly acceptable. Portents, maybe, expressions of guilt, if you like, but quite real and visible.”

The aunts argued, gently. The library clock whirred, clicked, struck five.

“What do people have now, then?” said Clare. “Instead of ghosts?”

[...] “I suppose obsessions would be the modern substitute,” said Aunt Susan.

“Neuroses of one kind and another. Burying anxiety in some kind of obsessive fancy.”  
(19–20)

This conversation suggests that Clare's obsession and recurring dreams are a kind of haunting (ghost stories are of course a type of intrusion fantasy), caused by her inability to reconcile herself to a history, in her case both familial and national, of empire. In her dreams about the "small brown men" (50) from whom the tamburan was taken, she is "afraid".

The lurking presence of imperial history, then, is the source of unhomeliness. Bhabha suggests that the unhomely is the breaking down of boundaries between the home and the world—in many of these texts, as argued above, we are reminded that empire's other has always existed in some sense within the home. Jane Suzanne Carroll describes it as a characteristic of the domestic space within the sanctuary topos that the "borders of the home are also the borders between public and private, family and community, self and other"; in these fantasies, these are precisely the borders which are broken down. Whereas the secondary world of the fantasy novel was once a stable and knowable entity, kept at a safe distance, these "other spaces" are now not only threatening and illegible, but can intrude into day-to-day life, or into the characters' psyches, at any moment. In the context of empire, this changing relationship with the space of the secondary world takes on an obvious significance—the other space of the empire is lost and increasingly inaccessible, while porous national borders let representatives of these other spaces into the sanctuary of the home. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the first half of this chapter, the home was never actually a sanctuary cut off from the other space of empire, but a space of which empire has always been an integral part.

Yet if fantasy is a site of postimperial unease, it may also be a site upon which the characters attempt to dispel that unease, as several of the novels discussed in this chapter demonstrate. In both *Mistress Masham's Repose* and *The River at Green Knowe*, as we have seen, past crimes are resolved with a comforting fantasy in which the colonised people cheerfully agree to enter into imperial relations of power. In *The House at Norham Gardens*, Clare is able to put aside the postimperial guilt that has haunted her through the book once she has convinced herself, through a final dream, that the New Guineans will no longer want the tamburan in any case. Butler lauds the book for being "ahead of its time in taking seriously the moral case for the restoration of anthropological artifacts to their originating culture" (*Four British Fantasists* 148), yet as Bradford demonstrates, the book's attitude towards the tribe relies on depicting it as static and unchanging, so that the inevitable changes caused by

the coming of Europeans are “tinged with regret and nostalgia” (Bradford 203). Rather than returning the tamburan to those who once owned it, Clare chooses to donate it to the Pitt-Rivers museum, alongside her great-grandfather’s collection. As Bradford notes, “Clare’s conclusion that ‘If it can’t be where it belongs, then a museum is the best place’ implies that there is no longer any ‘where,’ [as the tribe’s culture has changed so drastically] so that the museum, and the disciplinary formations of anthropology, become custodians of the object and its cultural meanings” (204). Rather than seriously considering the restoration of anthropological artefacts, the book provides a comforting fantasy to absolve the character of guilt. Yet *The House in Norham Gardens* does at least suggest that postimperial unhomeliness cannot always be so easily resolved. In discussing her anxiety with her great-aunts, Clare asks them how one might reconcile oneself to a problem ““that couldn’t be solved? That was so enormous it didn’t have an answer.’ ‘Then,’ said Aunt Susan, ‘it would be part of the process of living. One’s life tends to be littered with insoluble problems of one kind or another’” (20). If *The House in Norham Gardens* suggests that this enormous insoluble problem is that of reconciling oneself to the imperial past, it also suggests that the process of doing so will become “part of the process of living”, and that it is in the domestic sphere that this reconciliation must take place.

## Chapter 6. From Place to Race: Landscape Fantasies

This chapter will discuss a set of landscape fantasies from the 1960s and 1970s. I will, first, situate these novels in a tradition of children's landscape fiction as it appears in Ransome's camping and tramping novels and Tolkien and Lewis's fantasies, and in the context of that tradition's relationship to the re-creation of national identity in the wake of empire. I will demonstrate a renewed focus during this period on the archaeological and geological history of Britain, and examine this in the context of larger cultural debates around location, nationhood and identity. In particular, I will discuss these texts' use of the body of myth known as the Matter of Britain, in order to construct a particular territorial identity for Britain in the postimperial context. The final section will interrogate the changing status of the landscape as a source of personal, as well as national, identity. As I will argue, while these texts turn to the landscape of the British Isles as a space for the creation of identity, this domestic landscape is increasingly revealed to be a site for trauma. In the books discussed in this final section, the British landscape, and the heritage it represents, are seen as oppressive, rather than liberating forces acting upon the protagonists. Thus, the chapter as a whole marks not only the culmination of the inward movement described in earlier chapters of this thesis, but the seeming impossibility of space as a foundation for national identity.

As in the previous chapter, all of the texts discussed here may be considered part of the canon of British children's literature—and indeed William Mayne, Alan Garner, Sheena Porter and Penelope Lively are all Carnegie Medal-winners.

### 6.1 Reenchanting and Reinscribing

In my earlier chapter on Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* series I argued that over the course of the series the novels demonstrated an inward shift in focus; their subject was less and less on the narrative and imaginative possibilities of imperial space and increasingly concentrated on the local, British landscape. Nor were they the only contemporary children's novels to do so, as Hazel Sheeky Bird demonstrates in her study of "camping and tramping" fiction. Drawing on Raphael Samuel, Bird describes these novels, with their focus on the British landscape, character and heritage, as "national fictions"; narratives which are "actively

engaged in the process of nation-building, creating myths of national character” (“Camping and Tramping” 10). Lucy Pearson, in her recent work on the Carnegie Medal and the creation of a national canon of British children’s literature, also identifies in the Carnegie prize winners (of which the earliest was Ransome’s *Pigeon Post* in 1936) a preoccupation with “mapping a sense of nationhood which is predicated on rediscovering history, heritage, and the rural landscape” (“Prizing”). As I’ve shown in the earlier chapters on the work of Ransome, J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis, a number of mid-twentieth century writers turned to the fantasy genre and the creation of fantastic landscapes in order to negotiate the changing relationship with imperial space. While Tolkien and Lewis both created separate secondary worlds, all three writers also produced fantastical versions of the British landscape.

Bird characterises the camping and tramping genre as one which “described the extended holidays of groups of middle-class children, mostly in the English countryside” (7). Many of the novels I will discuss in the following chapter resemble in form the narrative she describes. The protagonists of Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) and *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), for example, are middle-class children on holiday in a rural landscape with which they are unfamiliar, while the Drews in Susan Cooper’s *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965) and *Greenwitch* (1974) are holiday visitors to a Cornish fishing village. The six children who feature in Sheena Porter’s *Nordy Bank* choose to build a camp site in a part of the Welsh Marches which is unfamiliar to all of them. This insistence on the unfamiliar landscape, one which needs to be explored and “solved” rather than one that is already known, has already been discussed in relation to the novels of Arthur Ransome.

However, the genre as Bird describes it is a strictly realist one; though she problematises the depiction of the landscape as empty and available to the protagonists, she differentiates between those novels which are only concerned with ordinary holiday activities and those in which the characters have improbable adventures. (Although, as I discuss at length in my earlier chapter on Arthur Ransome, this distinction between realist and non-realist modes becomes blurred in the case of the *Swallows and Amazons* books.) The books under consideration in this chapter differ sharply from this formulation in one major respect—they are fantasies, in most of which the child protagonists participate in a supernatural adventure, or quest. However, as I will show, in each case the quest has the landscape itself as its object.

Jed Esty quotes John McClure in noting that just as English modernists “used the romance formula to project mystery and magic onto colonies that were rapidly losing their exotic aura [... Similarly,] English writers in the 1930s used a variety of literary techniques and narratives to bring about the reenchancement of England itself” (Esty 41).<sup>1</sup> This desire for the “reenchancement” of the domestic landscape takes place in the context of a declining empire, as Valerie Krips has also shown, so that “the focus for national pride had to be realigned to the British Isles themselves” (21). In previous chapters I have discussed some of the “literary techniques” used to achieve this reenchancement—Ransome’s transposition of adventure narratives onto the Lake District, Tolkien’s “mythology for England” and C.S. Lewis’s reproduction of an idealised England in a secondary world all perform this function. Michael Saler has directly linked the desire to thus reenchance the landscape to the development of fantasy as a genre, and suggests that this project continues through the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In Alan Garner’s *The Moon of Gomrath*, the necessity of fantasy in order to add depth and meaning to the landscape is made particularly clear. Early in the book Colin and Susan, the protagonists of Garner’s earlier novel *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, find themselves dissatisfied with the local landscape now that their adventures are (as far as they know) over.

Almost they wished that they had never discovered enchantment: they found it unbearable that the woods for them should be empty of anything but loveliness, that the boulder that hid the iron gates should remain a boulder, that the cliff above the Holywell should be just a cliff. (19)

I discuss in earlier chapters how the imperial adventure novel used maps and quest narratives to render colonised space both knowable and desirable. Similarly, in these texts attempts to reenchance the landscape often take the form of a puzzle or quest in which the landscape itself is the mystery to be solved. John Clute has described, as a typical feature of British fantasy, quest narratives which “tend to be centripetal, leading inwards to the geographical heart of the place where the story begins” (198). An early example of this can be seen in William Mayne’s Carnegie Medal-winning 1957 novel *A Grass Rope*, in which a group of children of varying ages in rural Yorkshire work together to discover the truth behind a centuries-old family

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<sup>1</sup> See also John McClure, *Late Imperial Romance* (London: Verso, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> “The vogue for fantastic imaginary worlds from the fin-de-siècle through the twentieth century is best explained in terms of a larger cultural project of the West: that of re-enchancing an allegedly disenchanted world” (Salter 6). Salter, however, does not consider the changing relationship with empire when attempting to identify the source of this disenchantment.

legend. According to this legend, an ancestor of the Owland family owned a pack of hounds with silver collars, and a unicorn, all of which are said to have disappeared through a local cliff and into “Fairyland.” While the two teenagers, Nan Owland and Adam Forrest (a cousin of the present-day Dyson family who also play a part in the legend), find the story to be impossible, Adam, at least, believes that the legend must have some historical explanation. By contrast, the two younger children believe implicitly in the supernatural aspects of the tale. The children’s attempt to discover the truth is framed as a treasure hunt, and while the children do find the treasure (in the form of the nine silver collars of the missing hounds), Mayne leaves the landscape itself somewhat “unsolved”. Though the children are able to work out (and demystify) much of the legend, some aspects are left unexplained by the text, including the discovery of a skull with a single horn which might have come from the unicorn. The constant shifting between the perspectives of the older children, who do not believe in the supernatural aspects of the tale, and the younger children, who do, means that *A Grass Rope* is not strictly a fantasy novel—even though we are not presented with a rational explanation for the discovery of the unicorn’s horn, the text certainly implies that such an explanation exists. Yet the deliberate omission of an explanation not only leaves the text open to a fantastical reading, but, as with the nineteenth-century adventure narrative, invites the reader to participate in the process of solving the landscape as well.

Susan Cooper’s *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the first book in the author’s Dark is Rising sequence, is even more clearly a treasure hunt in which the landscape itself is the focus of the mystery. The three Drew children, Barnabas, Simon and Jane, are on holiday in Cornwall when they discover an old map in the attic of the house where they are staying. Like the protagonists of the Swallows and Amazons series, as well as of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Cooper’s characters begin their adventures by acting out adventure narratives with which they are familiar from their reading—on a rainy day in their holiday home they play at being “explorers,” much as the Pevensie children do. The Pevensies’ explorations lead them through a portal into another world; the Drew children, by contrast, find a map which appears to depict the *local* landscape which is to be the site of their great adventure. The Drews are required to solve this landscape in multiple ways—in order to decipher the map they must first work out that the headland they know as “Kemare Head” is a corruption of the older “King Mark’s Head” (49); later, the children have to make use of the local standing stones and other features of the landscape in order to orient themselves and find the hidden treasure which is in this case an ancient cup or “grail.” The title of the book (and the hiding place of

the grail) is significant—the object of the quest is “over sea, under stone,” and thus literally embedded in the land.

Significantly, the characters too must embed themselves in the land. Jane Suzanne Carroll notes the extent to which important scenes in the Dark is Rising sequence take place in what she describes as “the Chthonic Space”; “caves, mines and graves [...] all marked by descriptions of depth and often of darkness” (141). In these scenes, the protagonists find themselves travelling under or through the physical landscape itself, rather than looking at it from above—in *Over Sea, Under Stone*, for example, Barney and Simon must make their way through a long underground passage in order to reach the grail. Nor is Cooper the only one of the writers discussed here to use this device. In Mayne’s *A Grass Rope Mary*, the youngest child, must crawl through a tunnel to reach “Fairyland”. “The roof of the tunnel hit her head; it hit her shoulder; it hit each knob on her backbone. The tunnel walls came in and scraped her wrists and her knees and her ankles” (109). Mayne’s description emphasises the smallness of the space, even though the scene is told from Mary’s perspective and she is unaware of the dangers of her position.

Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* also contains a long central sequence in which the children and their companions are lost underground and forced to travel through increasingly small spaces. Unlike Mayne’s Mary, Colin and Susan are alive to the dangers of their situation:

Colin [...] thought of the hundreds of feet of rock above and of the miles of rock below, and of himself wedged into a nine-inch gap between.

“I’m a living fossil! Suppose I stick here: that’ll make archaeologists sit up!” (*WoB* 178)

A feature common to most of the books discussed here is a fascination with, as Butler describes it, “the past’s physical traces on the land” (*Four British Fantasists* 44).<sup>3</sup> William Mayne shows a fascination with objects (or in the case of the *Earthfasts* books, individuals) from the past emerging from underground—in several of his books child characters excavate the local landscape. In the quote from *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*, above, Colin

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<sup>3</sup> There is not space here to discuss another popular work, John Gordon’s *The Giant Under the Snow* (Hutchinson, 1968), in which a strangely-shaped hill is revealed to its protagonists to be not only an ancient tumulus but also a supernatural being known as the Green Man.



associates his own predicament with that of a fossil, to be unearthed centuries later. The excavation of objects from the distant past is a recurring theme in Garner's other works also—the axe-head that plays a central role in *Red Shift* (1973) and the pottery shard in *Elidor* (1965) are both excavated from the ground, while a central incident in *The Stone Book Quartet* (1979) has a child taken to an underground cavern to see a cave painting. Discussing *Thursbitch* (2003), one of Garner's later novels, Butler suggests that it “seems to have been more or less precipitated by the need to resolve a series of anomalous archaeological puzzles discovered by Garner” (47), and indeed the “geological-archaeological past” (46) offers a framework through which the landscape is rendered solvable.<sup>4</sup> Landscape and history are thus thoroughly intertwined in these books, so that the characters, in entering and excavating the landscape, are also coming face to face with the past and their own place within it.

Cooper was strongly influenced by Jacquetta Hawkes's book *A Land* (1951), a geological and archaeological history of the British Isles. She later befriended Hawkes and her husband J.B. Priestley, and *The Grey King* (1975), the fourth book in Cooper's sequence, is dedicated to the couple.<sup>5</sup> As Jane Suzanne Carroll notes, the study of landscape history, which combined historical and geographical approaches to the landscape, had become popular in Britain in the years following the Second World War. Hawkes's book was only one of the more influential works to emerge from the period. Hawkes herself credits “geologists and archaeologists, those instruments of consciousness who are engaged in reawakening the memory of the world” (19) for this shift in the ways in which the landscape was perceived, and Cooper was not the only children's writer to be strongly influenced by the movement. For example, the Carnegie Medal in 1953 had been awarded to a work of nonfiction, Edward Osmond's *A Valley Grows Up*, which documented the geological and historical evolution of a fictional valley over a period of seven thousand years.

Carroll reads Butler's assertion that the influence of Hawkes leads to a preoccupation in Cooper's work with “archaeology” rather too literally, but she too accepts the importance of Hawkes's work towards a depiction of the landscape in the books as “the true focaliser of the past” (J.S. Carroll 138). Rather than “archaeology,” she prefers Hawkes's metaphor of

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<sup>4</sup> Butler quotes Ronald Hutton's suggestion that archaeologists “have drawn public acclaim [by] functioning as protagonists in a quest romance” (*Four British Fantasists* 48).

<sup>5</sup> Priestley's own writing had played a significant role in the discourse around the English countryside that emerged in the 1930s.

“stratification;” the landscape in these texts is “constructed as a vast palimpsest, a text in which the correlation of space and time is realised through stratification” (J.S. Carroll 140). The past, then, is layered so that multiple times, histories and meanings exist simultaneously in one space, and entry points into the landscape (including caves and graves, as well as the underground passages in which all of the books in this chapter abound) allow the characters as well as the reader to interact directly with, as well as enter into a sense of kinship with that past. A clear metaphor for such stratification as a means of understanding the land through its history occurs in *A Grass Rope*. As the children are working together to understand the legend, they are also simultaneously restoring an old inn’s signboard. As the novel progresses, they sandpaper off successive layers of paint, revealing ever older images below, with each new layer and each picture adding to their understanding of the local legend—the story depicted by the signboard.

A fascination with history as it is manifested in the landscape is also a feature of Sheena Porter’s Carnegie-winning novel *Nordy Bank* (1964), which features a group of children on a camping holiday in the Cleve Hills in Shropshire. Porter’s characters are as fascinated by history as the text itself is. Margery looks out at the view and sees “the whole sweep of encircling hills and thought of their centuries, ages of time and ages of men, when the hills had not changed at all” (17), before she and her friend Bronwen are inspired to recite from A. E. Housman’s “The Welsh Marches” (18). The children later read to one another from Rosemary Sutcliff’s 1958 novel *Warrior Scarlet*, which is also set in Bronze Age Britain. As in the cases above, history is embedded in the physical landscape (as well as, as I discuss later in this chapter, a body of literature that recreates this history). The children discover a Bronze Age settlement on the hill, and Bron finds a store of round pebbles buried underground, which the Bronze Age warriors would have used for slings. As in the books by Garner, Cooper and Osmond mentioned above, the text’s (and the children’s) interest in the land’s history extends to the geological—in a brief scene, when all the children except Bron return home for a visit, the reader is introduced to Mr Norton, the curator of Ludlow Museum who “knows almost everything about fossils and is quite famous” (50). The children react with outrage to a visiting cousin’s suggestion that his might be an uninteresting job:

“It is not!” said Robin indignantly. “We get such good fossils that they almost look as though they’re going to start moving again. You can just imagine the creepy things crawling along through the slime.”

“And the ferns waving in the forest,” added Margery, “and there are some huge corals, too, and lovely patterns made by bark.” (50)

The novel never returns to this idea, yet the sense of a geological, as well as an archaeological past being made manifest within the landscape recalls Hawkes’s work, as well as that of the contemporary children’s writers mentioned above.

I have already described Foucault’s concept of the heterochrony, a space which is linked to a “[slice] in time,” or several times. In describing such heterochronies as museums and libraries, Foucault in fact uses a metaphor very similar to Hawkes’s definition of stratification; he describes them as “heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit” (26). If the landscape is, as Carroll describes it, a palimpsest comprising “layers and layers of time,” entry into the landscape also allows the characters to access more two or more times simultaneously. While none of these texts is a traditional time-slip novel, the simultaneity of past and present is a continual preoccupation with these writers. The Old Ones in *The Dark Is Rising* sequence are able to slip in and out of different times at will, and in Cooper’s later novel, *The King of Shadows* (1999) a character is transported four centuries into the past into Shakespeare’s England.<sup>6</sup> This slippage between the past and present can be seen in *A Grass Rope* as well. Hewlin, Peter Dyson’s dog, is named after and descended from one of the hounds in the medieval legend of Yowncorn Yat. Yet Peter, one of the younger children, claims that “our Hewlin was one of them” (20), and often speaks of Hewlin as if he were dog of the legend. Mr Owland, Nan and Mary’s father, has another explanation for Hewlin’s reaction to the sound of a hunting horn: suggesting that “I don’t see why he shouldn’t have a memory of what his ancestors did” (71), he attributes Hewlin’s behaviour to “race-memory, or group consciousness” (78). In *Nordy Bank*, Bron appears to be inhabiting a Bronze Age reality simultaneously with the novel’s present. In Garner’s *The Owl Service* (1967) the character Huw Halfbacon speaks of long-dead ancestors as his “grandfather” and “uncle,” and seems unfazed by the insistence of the other characters that the men in question must have lived centuries ago, so that he cannot possibly remember them (99). Garner’s later novel, *Red Shift* (1973), has characters from Roman Britain, the English Civil War and 1970s Cheshire connected to one another across time. All three narratives take place in the same area around Mow Cop in Cheshire, and all three have as their focus an old

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that although most time-slip novels, as mentioned in the previous chapter, take place in houses, Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906), arguably the first book of that genre, takes place under the titular hill, and similarly treats the landscape as a heterochrony which allows the characters to access and experience the history of Britain.

stone axe head (another object excavated from the land). The three narratives are further yoked together by the narrative such that they frequently blur into one another, so that not only the protagonists but the reader often struggles to distinguish which of the three times is being presented, and which of the three male protagonists is speaking. As Mark Fisher notes, the novel does not imply any clear relationship of causality operating forwards or backwards in time, as science-fictional or fantastical texts often do; instead he suggests that the “scrambling of time” is so complete as to undermine any sense of “past,” “present,” or “future” (93).<sup>7</sup> He suggests that the protagonists of *Red Shift* and *The Owl Service* are removed from time—they are “pitched out of linear time into a mythic time; or rather, the illusion of linearity is shattered by the eerie repetitions and simultaneities of a mythic time” (95). The “mythic” time referred to here is a consequence of the fact that both sets of characters are doomed to play out a particular myth—the ballad of Tam Lin in *Red Shift*, and the Blodeuwedd myth from the fourth branch of the Mabinogion in *The Owl Service*. Fisher’s reading here is a rather puzzling one—he seems at first to be suggesting that the characters exit linear time altogether, before qualifying the statement by implying that the characters *are* inhabiting their own presents, but that the linearity of the present is disrupted by the cyclical nature of the myth. It is notable that Garner’s own reading of *The Owl Service* in particular seems to waver between these two positions—as Neil Philip has shown, the author has at various points emphasised the contemporary aspect of the story, and at others the mythic (65). It is, however, impossible to entirely uncouple the myth from the contemporary story—much as Huw is inhabiting the past and present at once, Gwyn, Alison and Roger (and Tom and Jan in *Red Shift*) are simultaneously in mythic and real time. Rather than being pitched out of the present and into a separate temporal space in which the myths continuously play out, the mythic past, as it is embedded in the landscape, materially affects the characters in the present. This is in keeping with Jane Suzanne Carroll’s observations on the presence of multiple, simultaneous pasts in the landscape but, as I will discuss later in the chapter, in the case of *The Owl Service* and *Red Shift* it has several sinister implications for the characters.

If the presence of the past in the landscape allows the characters, through the land, to access multiple histories simultaneously, then, it also allows for the simultaneous presence of history and myth. In both *A Grass Rope* and *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* the mythical aspects of the landscape are intertwined with and inextricable from the more mundane local history. The interconnected networks of underground passages beneath Alderley Edge in *The*

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<sup>7</sup> This observation is, however, generally true of time-slip novels and hardly unique to Garner.

*Weirdstone of Brisingamen* have multiple origins—they are the result of the human-made mines about which the children have been warned, as well as of the Earldelving, a network of passages of Dwarfish origin, and the mythical underground caverns of Fundindelve. At points in the books these origins collapse into or overlay one another; in the sequel, *The Moon of Gomrath*, what is originally believed to be an old well belonging to the local inn turns out to be the centuries-old prison of a demonic creature known as the Brollachan. Similarly, in *A Grass Rope* Mary re-enacts the journey of the hounds and unicorn into Fairyland, even though the passage through which she crawls leads more prosaically to the bottom of an old mine shaft.

As I have demonstrated above, the fantasies of this period are as concerned with the *mythic* past and its presence in the landscape as they are with the more mundane historical past. Common to most of the books considered in this chapter, as well as to numerous other works of fantasy published during this period are references to King Arthur and the larger mythos with which this figure is associated. Arthur provides an interesting link between the historical and mythic pasts of Britain as he “appears to have had a dual life as a folkloric figure and an historical one from a very early date” (Butler and O’Donovan, 51). Arthur appears as a character in Cooper’s *Dark is Rising* quintet, and as a rather more enigmatic figure in William Mayne’s *Earthfasts* (1966). Morgan le Fay, a character from Arthurian legend, is the antagonist of Penelope Lively’s *The Whispering Knights*, and the novel implies that a group of local standing stones are transfigured versions of Arthur’s knights. In several cases Arthur is buried underground, and is therefore presented as a part of the landscape as well as being a character in his own right. In Cooper’s *The Grey King*, for example, Will and Bran encounter him in a cave in a mountain. The *Dark is Rising* sequence also makes reference to a legend in which Arthur and his knights lie sleeping underground until they are needed. Alan Garner’s *Weirdstone of Brisingamen* features a variant of this “Sleeper under the Hill” trope.<sup>8</sup> In *Earthfasts*, the drummer boy Nellie Jack John was buried underground centuries ago while searching for Arthur’s treasure—later in the book it is revealed that Arthur and his knights are also still under the ground, awaiting the future moment when they will awake. So ubiquitous is Arthur’s presence in the physical and mythological landscape of Britain that Susan Cooper’s characters even remark upon it.

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<sup>8</sup> This trope is described in *The Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* as a theme found across Europe, and most commonly in Arthurian fiction, in which “a past hero or king is only sleeping in a hall under a hill and at a time of national crisis will return to save the Land” (Clute and Grant, 873).

“No,” Will said, smiling. “Hardly. If Arthur had ridden over every hollow called Arthur’s Hoofprint, or sat on every rock called Arthur’s Seat, or drunk from every spring called Arthur’s Well, he’d have spent his whole life travelling around Britain without a stop.”

“And so would the knights,” Bran said cheerfully, “To sit round every hill called King Arthur’s Round Table.” (*Silver on the Tree*, 95)

That Arthur should be thus literally embedded in the British landscape is unsurprising. It is significant that the vast body of myth connected to the figure is generally referred to as “the Matter of Britain;” this body of myth has historically served as a site for the creation of Britishness, serving particular ideological functions at particular moments. For example, Stephanie L. Barczewski has demonstrated the extent to which the Arthur myth played a central role in the formation of national identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, the myth had often been deployed in the service of empire, as in Edward Bulwer Lytton’s epic poem *King Arthur* (1849), in which Arthur sacrifices his life for a vision of a prosperous future empire under Queen Victoria; or in responses to the Great Rebellion (formerly known as the Indian Mutiny) of 1857, which “took on a specifically chivalric, and very often Arthurian form” (Barczewski 216). Barczewski suggests that over the course of the nineteenth century the ethnicity of Arthur, along with that of another national mythic hero, Robin Hood, had been altered—they had been increasingly portrayed as *English*, rather than *British*, “so as to bring them into line with contemporary racist theories of the superiority of the Saxon race” (232).

The twentieth century, however, saw a shift in the presentation of Arthur. While many twentieth century authors continued to refer to Arthur as the “King of England,” thus eliding his links to Celtic traditions (233), Barczewski identifies a growing trend during this century towards emphasising Arthur’s *Britishness* rather than Englishness, particularly in the wake of the two World Wars, when “it became imperative to emphasize the similarities, rather than the differences, between the ethnic groups who comprised the nation” (235). Meanwhile, Welsh authors also were reasserting their right to the legend. Geraint Evans notes that the image of the sleeping king in the cave, discussed above, is the most common depiction of Arthur in twentieth-century Welsh writing (435). He describes this image as one that “captures the essence of post-colonial opposition,” and contrasts it with the alignment of Arthur’s court with the fading empire in Tennyson’s depiction of the passing of Arthur (435).

Thus, much as the Arthur myth had pandered to an imperial understanding of Britishness in the previous century, it served multiple ideological functions during this period depending on who was doing the writing—it was used both in the service of pan-British nation building and as an inspiration for a form of postcolonial awakening. Another factor in the changing representation of the myth was the influence of a series of excavations in the 1950s and 1960s, which led to an increasing belief in a historical Arthur, though this belief began to decline in the 1970s (Butler and O’Donovan, 52–54). The presentation of Arthur as a historical figure offered a potential subject for a heroic (and importantly, pre-imperial) national history, at a time when, as Valerie Krips has described it, in the wake of decolonisation British writers were “looking inward for origins and history” (1). That these explorations into the historical Arthur located him in the period immediately after the withdrawal of the Roman Empire from Britain may also have played a part in the popularity of this figure. As Butler and O’Donovan have shown, historical fiction for children published during this period also emphasised the period of Rome’s withdrawal from Britain, rather than the period of conquest; subject matter which allowed these books to meditate upon and rehearse the processes and consequences of decolonisation (46).

The Arthur myth not only forms a basis for an understanding of British identity, but is frequently used to construct an alternate (and enchanted) British landscape. Janice Lingley draws attention to the preface of Rudyard Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, in which the enchanted other-England of the stories is given a separate name: “She is not any common Earth, Water or Wood or air, / But Merlin’s Isle of Gramarye, Where you and I will fare.” While, she suggests, some of Kipling’s readers may have been familiar with the word “gramarye” from its appearance in the ballad “King Estmere”, its use to denote a specifically *topographical* space seems to have originated with Kipling (Lingley 16). T.H. White, in *The Once and Future King*, draws on Kipling to set his retelling of the Arthur story in the kingdom of “Gramarye;” an alternate Britain in which magic is possible, and which was invaded in 1066, not by William the Conqueror but by Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur.<sup>9</sup> Thus Gramarye is established as an alternate Britain; an “other” space in which the Matter of Britain is played out. Susan Cooper’s *The Dark is Rising* (1973) features a “Book of Gramarye” which contains the magical knowledge which Will requires to take his place as an

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<sup>9</sup> White’s book is composed of four separate shorter novels, published over two decades, with the final volume published in 1958. Only the first of these, *The Sword in the Stone* (1938) is generally considered a children’s book, so that the work as a whole unfortunately falls outside the scope of this thesis.

Old One.<sup>10</sup> Cooper's use of the word loses the topographical meaning, but as Michael D.C. Drout convincingly argues, the book is textually linked to "Anglo-Saxon and Welsh tradition (and from nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors' adaptations of that tradition)" so that Will's knowledge "arises out of medieval materials that have been used to inculcate in [him] an identity that grows out of these traditions" ("Reading" 240). Thus the physical space of "Gramarye" is replaced with a shared cultural space.

Cooper does make use of another archaic name for the territory ruled by Arthur, and appears to use it in a similar way to White's Gramarye. In an early scene in *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the Drew children and Merriman Lyon stand on a cliff in Cornwall and look inland:

"Hic incipit regnum Logri ..." Great-Uncle Merry said, looking out with them across it all, as if he were reading out an inscription.

"What does that mean?"

"Here begins the realm of Logres ..." (67)

Earlier in the book, Barney Drew has described Logres as "the land of the West [...] it's the old name for Cornwall. King Arthur's name" (10). Cooper's use of the word here is strange, since Cornwall is generally presented in Arthurian myth as separate from Arthur's kingdom of Logres—and *Over Sea, Under Stone* makes several references to King Mark, the ruler of Cornwall. Cooper explains, through Merriman, that Logres "was the old name for this country, thousands of years ago" (71) and appears to be appropriating the word to encompass more territory than is traditional, creating a sense that "Logres" extends to the physical boundaries of the island of Great Britain (the children's location, looking inland from a coastal cliff, is significant here). The implication is of the British Isles as a unified physical space, and reflects Jacquetta Hawkes's earlier treatment of Britain as a single, though stratified, geological object. As Jankaluk and Wooding note, the Matter of Britain itself was "in part a product of the rich relationship between the Irish, Welsh, and English during the eighth to tenth centuries" (Jankaluk and Wooding, 73) and thus, as with the Book of Gramarye, enacts at a cultural level a similar binding together of the physical landscape of the

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<sup>10</sup> Gramarye, Lingley notes, "except when used archaically, means 'grammar; learning in general', and referred particularly to mediaeval Latin, the language of scholarship and wisdom. In the ballad, gramarye, in its primary lexical sense, is the means by which the romance of chivalry and swordsmanship and traditional minstrelsy and song are magically enhanced; 'gramarye' also comprehends magical plant-lore – changing appearance, creating disguise and giving protection" (17). Cooper appears to draw on both of these sets of meanings in her creation of the Book of Gramarye.



British Isles. The Matter of Britain thus becomes in a sense the *physical* matter of Britain—the rock, stone and soil that make up the landscape are defined through the means of the myth. It also, by implication, defines the boundaries of British space; something of particular significance in the wake of decolonisation, when these boundaries were of necessity being renegotiated.

In reading the Matter of Britain as a force that binds the British Isles together, it is important to note that none of the books discussed in this chapter is in its entirety a retelling of the Arthur myth—though popular and influential retellings like those of Rosemary Sutcliff and T.H. White were published during the period.<sup>11</sup> There is no explanation in *Earthfasts* for Arthur’s presence under the earth, and the king under Alderley Edge is not even named in *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. Though Morgan le Fey is named in Penelope Lively’s *The Whispering Knights*, the text only obliquely refers to her connection with Arthur. Even in Cooper’s Dark is Rising series, in which Arthur is an important character, figures and symbols from the mythos are only invoked, rather than explained, and the reader is expected to recognise and extrapolate from them. The books thus assume a shared cultural heritage within which it is unnecessary to explain to the reader (or to the children who are the protagonists of these texts) the significance of particular characters or objects. In *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the valuable object discovered by the Drew children is labelled a “chalice” by the museum, though the children themselves insist on referring to it as “the grail” (219), and in doing so invoke the larger tradition of Arthurian myth. As Jane Suzanne Carroll points out, Simon Drew’s admission that he had expected the grail to be a different shape suggests that the Matter of Britain forms a part of “an inherited cultural symbolism” (135). In an interview conducted in 1989, Cooper attributes the series itself to a similar set of cultural symbols:

I was just writing a series of fantasies which draw on everything I’d ever read, lived through, and absorbed through general cultural osmosis. The Matter of Britain was part of a great mass of stuff in my subconscious, which consisted of fairytale, folktale, myth—that whole range of material that had always appealed to me enormously since childhood. (Thompson, 161–162)

John Clute notes, in speaking of Cooper’s series, that the Matter of Britain “is itself almost intractably complex, not only because of the incoherence and mutual incompatibilities that

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<sup>11</sup> Sutcliff is best known for the Eagle of the Ninth series of historical novels (1954–1980), which locate Arthur in Roman Britain, but she also wrote a trilogy of Arthurian fantasies (1979–1981) based on Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*.

muddy the inner tale, if there is indeed a single inner tale that can be told, but also because the Matter has been traversed in poem and story by many tellers over many centuries” (165). Several of the books mentioned here appear to be engaged in the act of creating, not a single myth for the British Isles, but a body of overlapping, contradictory and inconsistent myths that can contain localised and specific legends as well as broader ones, encompassing several facets of Britain’s cultural history.<sup>12</sup> For example, Jane Suzanne Carroll notes of Cooper’s invocation of Herne the Hunter, that although Cooper localises the character to Windsor Park, the myth of the Wild Hunt has echoes across the British Isles and Europe, and the figure appears as Cernunnos, Arawn, Herla and Woden, so that he can be simultaneously both universal and local (J.S. Carroll 84). Similarly, Alan Garner is able to include both the Wild Hunt and a local, Cheshire-based version of the “sleeper under the hill” myth alongside references to the Mabinogion and Norse myth (the sleepers will awake for Ragnarok) in the two Alderley Edge novels, and Cooper is able to locate the sleepers in Wales and Herne in Buckinghamshire, as well as invoking very specific local traditions like that of the Mari Lwyd.<sup>13</sup> Discussing Garner’s *The Owl Service* (examined in more detail below), Dimitra Fimi notes that even in a text seemingly based wholly on one Welsh myth (the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion), references to medieval Irish literature are woven into the text, suggesting that the two literatures form part of a common “Celtic” heritage (167–169).

This is not to suggest, however, that knowledge of the mythic traditions of the British Isles is inherent to the characters. The Drews, or Colin and Susan, may have, as Cooper describes it above, “a great mass of stuff in [their] subconscious,” but the texts frequently make reference to aspects of culture that have to be learned. This is particularly so in the case of the Welsh characters, like Cooper’s Bran and Garner’s Gwyn. In *The Owl Service*, Gwyn is reading the Mabinogion only because he is required to do so by a master at his grammar school. Similarly, in a scene in *The Grey King*, Bran and Will are asked a series of questions in order to enable them to complete a quest for a golden harp. Bran is able to answer that “the Three Elders of the World” are “the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd, the Eagle of Gwernabwy, and the Blackbird of Celli Gadarn” (91). Drout notes that while Bran’s source for this knowledge is not explained in the text, it can in this case be found in the Mabinogion, and that “as Bran

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<sup>12</sup> Maria Sachiko Cecire connects the focus of many of these works on Old Norse and Anglo Saxon texts to the influence of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, who both contributed to the “medieval-heavy English curriculum” at Oxford during this time (“Medievalism” 398).

<sup>13</sup> A hobby horse made with a horse’s skull. The tradition comes from South Wales and is mentioned in Cooper’s *Silver on the Tree* as a childhood memory that terrifies Bran.

says, he would have read these tales in school and he would have read them in Welsh. He finds the answers to the riddles because he is literate in his traditional national literature, a literature that constructs national [...] identities” (“Reading” 239). Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn note that these novels were written in the context of a revival of the Welsh language in the mid-twentieth century, so that there was both a greater awareness and greater access to Welsh myth and culture (124). Will’s knowledge, in the same scene, is derived from the Book of Gramarye which, as I have already noted, links together a territorial and cultural binding of the British Isles. Mendlesohn, Levy and Drouot’s analyses here serve as a reminder that national identity is mediated through institutions such as the school and legal systems.

The section above has been concerned, in the main, with a movement to relocate national pride and the basis for national and personal identity within the British Isles in the wake of empire. As I have shown, the texts discussed attempt to “reenchant” the landscape and imbue it with meaning through appeals to a historical and mythical past, which is embedded within this landscape. While several of these books also locate a personal and familial heritage within the space, and attempt to reinscribe the presence of their characters into the landscape through references to their family histories, others construct a shared national culture by invoking a common body of myths. This is seen most clearly in the frequent references to Arthurian legends, which are used, as I show, to redefine the physical boundaries of Britain. Simultaneously, an emphasis on the geological past of the British Isles serves to reinforce a cultural understanding of the British Isles, and particularly of Great Britain, as a single geological entity.

This turning inwards towards the domestic landscape is, as Krips and Esty suggest, a response to decolonisation. While the concerns of the texts discussed above appear almost wholly domestic, postimperial concerns underlie this body of literature. This will become increasingly evident in the following section, in which these texts, and their creation of a new national identity and national space, are interrogated in the context of immigration, as well as the larger institutional changes in the understanding of national identity that took place during the decades following the Second World War.

## 6.2 Belonging and Unhomeliness

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the mid-twentieth century saw an unprecedented migration of subjects from Britain's colonies to the imperial centre. The presence of an increasing population of immigrants, particularly non-white immigrants, engendered a great deal of anxiety. Rhetoric around immigration frequently invoked the image of a country under siege—as part of an electoral campaign in 1978, Margaret Thatcher referred sympathetically to a (implicitly white) British population who felt “swamped by people of a different culture.” The period also, and as a result, witnessed a series of legal enactments which redefined British identity and the question of who had the right to settle in Britain. As Ian Baucom has explained, in previous centuries the territorial principle of *ius soli*, or “the right of the soil,” had been recognised as the ultimate determinant of British identity. However, the territory or “soil” implied by this law was far from stable. As I have explained in my introductory chapter, for much of the duration of the British Empire there had existed a confusion about the status of the colonised territories, which were at times regarded as a “Greater Britain” (i.e. part of the same political entity, with Great Britain as its centre), and at times as an entity separate from Great Britain itself. However, all of those born on British “soil” (including England, the British Isles, and the British colonies scattered across the globe) were British subjects by law. In some cases this British subjecthood continued even after the colonies gained independence—the 1948 British Nationality Act, for example, conferred Britishness even upon the citizens of India (which had gained independence the previous year) and the Dominions. In the years following the arrival of the *MV Empire Windrush*, and in the wake of immigration from the former colonies to the British Isles, however, Baucom identifies a shift in the formation of identity which “largely abandon[ed] spatial and territorial ideologies for a racial ‘discourse of loyalty’ and coidentity” (12). From the 1960s onwards this cultural shift was embodied in legal changes as well—the 1971 Immigration Act introduced the concept of “patriality,” conferring the right of abode only upon those who had either been born within the United Kingdom, or whose parents or grandparents had been born there, while the 1981 Nationality Bill further modified this principle so that even children born within the United Kingdom would no longer be entitled to British citizenship unless a parent was a British citizen or legally settled there. In abolishing the automatic right to British citizenship for people born on British soil, the 1981 bill effectively replaced the principle of *ius soli* entirely with that of “*ius sanguinis*” (right of blood). Essentially, as Baucom notes, this law replaced territorial understandings of British identity with:

[...] genealogical and racial principles of shared identity and rights. For, as the bill's framers clearly understood, by adding the question "who were your ancestors?" to the question "where were you born?" (indeed, in many cases, by making the former question the more important), the act effectively guaranteed that most of those who would qualify as patrials would be the children or grandchildren of whites who had moved abroad rather than the children of Indians, Pakistanis, or Nigerians whose parents or grandparents had been born in the colonies." (13)

The result of these legal enactments was thus to privilege white Commonwealth subjects. Paul Gilroy similarly describes the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 (which had abolished the future right of entry of immigrants from Commonwealth countries, and which was superseded by the 1971 Immigration Act), and the 1981 Nationality Act as "part of a strategy for the exclusion of black settlers" (*There Ain't No Black* 44); in redefining Britishness as a product of biological heritage, over this period racial exclusion was codified into law.

Since these cultural and legal shifts in the understanding of what constituted British identity were taking place over the three decades leading to the 1981 Act, and since all of the landscape fantasies discussed in this chapter were published over this period, it is instructive to read their narratives of shared cultural identity and the arrival of outsiders to the British Isles in this context. While these texts continually return to questions of belonging, none of them features any major non-white character, or even any major character from outside the British Isles, though minor characters are occasionally marked out as being of a different race to the protagonists. Nevertheless, as I will show, they are thoroughly embedded in the contemporary discourse around immigration.

William Mayne's *Earthfasts* (1966) and Susan Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975) and *The Silver on the Tree* (1977) feature displaced characters who are accepted into the local community. Significantly, however, in both cases this displacement is temporal rather than spatial. The drummer boy in *Earthfasts* is from the year 1742. Arriving in 1960s rural Yorkshire he finds that the landscape has become unfamiliar in important ways—there are main roads, street lamps, and the effects of the Enclosure Act. The boy refuses at first to stay in this drastically altered world where "there's no folk as I knows" (49) but, unable to return to his own time, is eventually forced to accept that he must live in the twentieth century. However, Mayne suggests that the boy shares a common culture with the inhabitants of the

community in which he must now find a home. Keith and David, the two twentieth-century boys who find him, recognise a local naming custom behind his name (“Nellie Jack John”), and that his surname, Cherry, “was a well-known name in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale” (34). When the boy walks into an old house which he believes to be his own, the woman who lives there recognises him: “he just had a look on him, I knew, like one of the Cherrys that lived here in the old days” (42). The elderly man living next door is able to trace his own family history back to Nellie Jack John’s brother (43). Mayne creates the impression of an old and tightly-knit community where everyone is related to everyone else (““He’s a distant cousin of my mother.’ ‘Like most people,’ said Dr Wix.” [88]), and in which Nellie Jack John can find a new place with relative ease. A minor plot within the novel concerns the arrival of a boggart at a local farm, causing some inconvenience. However, says the farmer: “Not that one boggart’s all that strange, you see. It’s been in the family, or the house, or both, for a long time” (126), and the farmer’s wife agrees that “I married into the family. I’ll have to put up with it” (127). Like Nellie Jack John, the boggart is a disruptive force from outside the local people’s experience, but is revealed despite this to already have a place within this culture.<sup>14</sup> By the end of the book, both the boggart and Nellie Jack John are established at the farm, having been accepted into the community by virtue of their shared cultural and territorial identities.

In Cooper’s *The Grey King*, Bran Davies is also displaced in time, though he is at first unaware of this fact. The son of King Arthur, he has been brought into the future for his safety and has grown up in twentieth century Wales as the son of Owen Davies. Bran is marked out from the local community by his physical difference—he has a form of albinism and has white hair and golden eyes, whereas “all good Welshmen are dark, dark of hair and dark of eyes, and the only fair-skinned creatures in Wales, in the old days, were the *Tylwyth Teg*. The old spirits, the little people” (49).<sup>15</sup> In the final book in the series, *Silver on the Tree*, Bran is offered the opportunity to return to “the time in which he belongs.”

Merriman said, without moving from his place at the stern of the boat, “Belonging. That is the answer to this challenge. Whether it was the boy’s mother or the Light who chose the time into which he came to grow up, or whether the choice was random,

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<sup>14</sup> The boggart is a mischievous local spirit in English folklore, “almost exactly like a poltergeist in its habits” (Briggs, 269).

<sup>15</sup> Even this description of Bran’s outsider status aligns him with “old spirits” which already had a place in this (Welsh) national imaginary.

nevertheless he has attached himself to that time. He has bound himself by love to those with whom he has lived there.” (263)

While the forces of the Dark challenge Bran’s right to live in the twentieth century, his sense of “belonging” to the *land* is never contested. Like Nellie Jack John, he even emerges from the land itself—his mother came “out of the mountains” and “back into the mountains she went” (166). And the intertwining of his personal history with the Arthur myth gives him an even greater claim to both a Welsh, and a British, identity. Bran is, literally, a part of the “matter” of Britain.

In an early incident in *Silver on the Tree*, members of Will Stanton’s family witness the bullying of a young Sikh boy and come to his defence. Later, when confronted with the bully’s father who defends his son’s racist bullying and condemns the presence of immigrants “taking jobs that should go to Englishmen” (62), Stephen Stanton launches into a defence of the Singh family and their right to remain in Britain:

‘Do you know Calcutta, Mr Moore?’ He said. ‘Have you ever had beggars grabbing at your feet, calling out to you, children half the size of Will here with an arm missing, or an eye, and ribs like xylophones and their legs stinking with sores? If I lived in a place with that kind of despair round me, I think I just might decide to bring my kids up in a country where they’d have a better chance. Specially a country that had exploited my own for about two hundred years. Wouldn’t you? Or Jamaica, now. Do you know how many children get to a secondary school there? D’you know the unemployment rate? D’you know what the slums are like in Kingston?’ (63)

Stephen’s speech in favour of immigration from the former colonies contains at least an acknowledgement of the violence of empire, and in this it is unusual among the books discussed in this chapter (as I will discuss further below). However, critics of Cooper’s series seem unsure what to make of this scene, since the Singh family have no further role to play within the book, although Will reflects that Mr Moore’s xenophobia, “born of nothing more solid than insecurity and fear,” is “a channel down which the powers of the Dark, if they gained their freedom, could ride in an instant” (64). Maria Sachiko Cecire complains that the incident “has no bearing on the plot, and seems to exist simply to assure readers that the unarguably Anglocentric and medievalised series is not xenophobic” (“Medievalism” 401). Butler attempts to defend the scene’s inclusion, noting that that in fact the incident is crucial in establishing a direct connection between “the grand magical conflict and the complex,

untidy moral decisions of daily life,” and suggesting that Cooper’s use of racism as “a paradigmatic instance of human evil” (*Four British Fantasists* 142) indicates the importance with which the author regards the subject.<sup>16</sup> However, while the inclusion of such a scene might be justified in the context of a wider public discourse in which immigration and race was a key subject, it’s telling that (with the exception of a passing reference to a West Indian bus conductor in the second book in the sequence) non-white immigrants only appear in the series to illustrate this point.

Neither Butler nor Cecire directly connects the Singh family with the scene at the end of the book, in which Merriman Lyon and John Rowlands defend Bran, yet reading these two scenes in conjunction with one another sheds light on both. Both scenes feature one or more characters arguing for the right of another character to remain within the space of twentieth-century Britain, but the substance of the arguments presented in each case is very different. Bran has a claim to a British identity based on his history with and participation in the community and the love his friends and family feel for him. These bonds of love, states Merriman, “are outside the control even of the High Magic, for they are the strongest thing on all this earth” (264). The right of the Singh family, and of other Asian or West Indian immigrants, to live in Britain is however made contingent on whether they are fleeing terrible circumstances, invoked by the association of India with horrifying images of slums and beggars. This is a rhetorical move which, though it acknowledges Britain’s role in the creation of those circumstances, suggests that the Singhs are being generously offered refuge, rather than continuing to be a part of a British community to which they have belonged for centuries. Stephen further argues that “the National Health Service would fall apart,” were it not for immigrant doctors and nurses, suggesting that the presence of Asian immigrants is useful to Britain (63). There is thus no indication that the text is aware of any shared culture between the Stantons and the Singhs. Instead, the historicity of the domestic landscape, which allows the modern-day characters to find a place for Bran Davies and Nellie Jack John in their communities, is used to elide the history of Britain in recent centuries—a history in which the Singhs have a far greater connection to modern Britain than these characters out of the distant past. As Simon Gikandi has noted, the focus on the local landscape in postimperial Britain thus has the effect of positioning imperial history as ephemeral, having little effect on British

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<sup>16</sup> Michael D.C. Drout draws attention to an incident later in the book, in which the characters travel into the past to meet a (to Drout) surprisingly tolerant Owain Glyndwr, noting that, within the binary opposition between Light and Dark set up by Cooper, “good people do not practice race-hatred. Therefore Glyndwr, on the side of the Light, must have an anachronistically modern attitude towards race” (“Reading” 235–236).



national culture. At the very moment at which Britain's imperial others begin to enter (what Gikandi calls) the "English physical space", then, we find "a calculated attempt to configure Englishness as exclusionary of its colonial wards" (71). The Singhs exist outside the "bonds of love" whose strength Merriman extolls.

As I explain above, Stephanie Barczewski credits the shift in focus in Arthurian retellings, from the "strict racialist divisions" of the nineteenth century towards a more inclusive British identity, to the two world wars and the need to put aside differences to defend the nation. However, it is difficult to see how immigrants from outside the British Isles could fit into such a paradigm. One such minor immigrant character appears in Penelope Lively's *The Whispering Knights*. On a visit to the hospital the child protagonists of this book meet one Dr Chatterjee, described as thin and dark-skinned, as well as speaking with an accent. Chatterjee's diagnosis of Martha (who has been possessed by the evil spirit of Morgan le Fey) is broadly accurate: "'If we were in my country,' he said, speaking very fast, 'I would say that she had come under the influence of some evil person. I have seen this kind of thing before'" (121). The text thus implies that characters from, or with experience of, Eastern countries are more receptive to supernatural explanations—an idea that is also hinted at in Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*, discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>17</sup> Chatterjee's "if we were in my country" suggests that he does *not* feel comfortable making such a diagnosis in Britain, and the nurse shows obvious disapproval. Dr Chatterjee's ability to identify the supernatural when it intrudes into daily life creates a link between him and the children, and allows a brief point of entry for the immigrant Indian doctor into this highly localised version of the Arthur myth, albeit through an orientalisng framework that posits the East as the natural home of supernatural events.

Cooper's attempts to include other races and nations in her depiction of the Matter of Britain are not entirely successful, in large part because the conceit of the series requires the reader to understand the Matter of Britain as a cause of universal significance. The circle of the Old Ones is presented as a global and multi-racial community; Simon describes it as looking "like the United Nations" (*Silver on the Tree* 242). However, as M. Daphne Kutzer

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<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in William Mayne's *It*, discussed in more detail below, Alice's possession by the mysterious "IT" makes perfect sense to her mother since she "was with [Alice's grandfather] in New Guinea when he was a missionary [...] we are both quite familiar with wandering spirits that attach themselves to people for a time" (140).

points out, the major figures of the Light all appear to be British, and the setting for the joining of the circles too is Britain (“Thatcherites” 199). Early in *Silver on the Tree*, Will’s brother Stephen describes being approached by “an old Jamaican” with “his black, black face and his white, white hair”, and charged with carrying a message to Will that “the Old Ones of the ocean islands are ready” (21). Some months later, in Gibraltar, another stranger (“Arab I think”) informs him that “the Old Ones of the south are ready” (21). Drawing attention to this scene, Drout notes that these scenes are set in (former) British overseas colonies, giving the impression that “the circle of the Old Ones reports back to England as if they were colonial governors reporting to the home office” (“Reading” 238).<sup>18</sup> The implication is of the entire world standing in readiness to contribute to a British cause, and thus mimics the logic of imperial spatial relations, within which the colonies exist merely to better serve the needs of the metropole.

Butler argues that for a British writer of epic fantasy to make Britain the arena for world-saving events is hardly surprising, and notes that other writers of epic fantasy who foreground Britain have not attracted this critique (*Four British Fantasists* 143). However, this reading does not take into account the ways in which the myth was used in the nineteenth century as a tool of empire. Barczewski describes the trajectory of the myth as “inherently imperial”:

Much like civil servants going out from London to administer the colonies under the nation’s command, the Knights of the Round Table disperse from Arthur’s court at Camelot in order to bring the benefits of their ostensibly superior civilization to the less fortunate parts of the world. (214)

The colonial parallels are clear, and this depiction of Arthur’s court as a moral centre from which his envoys spread civilisation continues as late into the century as T.H. White’s *The Once and Future King*. Much as this Victorian iteration of the myth establishes the moral centre in Britain, whence civilisation spreads outwards, in Cooper’s books Merriman too seems to attribute an inherent civilising property to the British Isles. Late in the book Arthur laments a continual process in British history by which “the savages bring in the Dark,” only to be reminded by Merriman that “the grandsons of the invaders may be gentled and tamed by the land their forefathers despoiled” (255). The Dark, according to Arthur and Merriman,

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<sup>18</sup> Drout’s use of “England” here is, however, inaccurate; while power in the series is physically located within Britain, many of the powerful characters are Welsh, and Wales is the site for many of the major events.

seems always to originate from outside the territorial boundaries of the British Isles, and ties into a depiction of Britain's history as being one of continuous invasion which Cooper links with her childhood during World War II. She claims that "it put me into contact with all the other times that England has been threatened with invasion. We are such mongrels: we have been invaded over and over and over again from Scandinavia, from Ireland, from the Continent" (Thompson 164). Cooper's formulation of the country as one whose history consists of a series of invasions is telling—it elides the history of imperial Britain in order to present postwar England as a vulnerable space subject to invasion. An image of a country forged by waves of invaders is presented to us in *Silver on the Tree* when Barney, taken back in time, meets the Welsh hero Owain Glyndwr:

Owain said, bitterly, "The Norman rides always on the back of the Dark, as the Saxon did, and the Dane."

Barney said unhappily, "And I'm all those things mixed up, I suppose. Norman and Anglo-Saxon and Dane."

[...] He looked down at Barney. "No worry about your race, boy. Time changes the nature of them all, in the end." (235)

That these waves of invaders should result in "all those things mixed up," and that the virtuous Drew family should be a product of this "mixing" may appear to support an inclusive understanding of a British identity that can encompass many cultures and races, particularly if the book is read against the background of a public discourse of which immigration is a prominent part. However, taken in the context of Merriman and Arthur's description of the "savages" who require civilising, this nod to a multicultural future in this context has the effect of positioning the arrival on British soil of former subjects of Britain's own empire as a hostile invading force, and further, aligns them with the Dark. The image of the island under siege from dark savages is one that echoes contemporary anti-immigration rhetoric. Simon Gikandi argues that the black figure historically has provided "the metaphorical structure that enables [Englishness] to gaze at its self in crisis" (69). In the postimperial age, however, when black immigrants begin to enter into what he describes as the English physical space, the "English social order [...] tries to adjust to identities that are no longer bounded by externalized alterity" (70). In the previous chapter I discussed the rhetoric of invasion which led to the portrayal of black immigrants besieging the domestic threshold in this period. Paul Gilroy describes the process by which, through this rhetoric, "the discourses which together constitute 'race' direct attention to national boundaries, focusing attention on the entry and

exit of blacks” (*There Ain’t No Black* 45). Noting the frequency with which phrases like “the Island race” and “the Bulldog breed” posit a Britishness that is simultaneously biological and cultural, Gilroy argues that “the limits of ‘race’ have come to coincide so precisely with national frontiers [...] Race is bounded on all sides by the sea” (*There Ain’t No Black* 46). Read in this context, not only the invocation of this rhetoric of invasion, but the constant return to the image of a pre-imperial Britain (or Gramarye, or Logres) as an island “bounded on all sides by the sea” in Cooper’s series contributes to and participates in this recreation of British identity to exclude former colonial subjects.

The larger shift in the terms in which British identity was understood, as described by Baucom, affects “native” English and Welsh characters as well—Barney’s realisation, quoted above, that he is the product of a series of invaders suggests that he feels some anxiety about his own “place.” In the camping and tramping books of the 1930s, as I showed in my discussion of Ransome’s *Swallows and Amazons* series, characters form a sense of local and national identity through an engagement with the local landscape and its history. This is to some extent true of the fantasies discussed in this chapter, yet, as I will show, the relationship between characters and the landscape becomes more complex.

In *A Grass Rope* the mystery the children are attempting to solve is one connected with their own families, and the reader is reminded that the Owlands and Dysons have lived in the area for centuries. In many of the books mentioned here, the children’s adventures are closely connected to the history of their families in a particular place. In Porter’s *Nordy Bank*, which I discuss in further detail below, it is only the half-Welsh Bron who forges a supernatural connection with the ancient settlement by which the children have chosen to camp; the other, English, children remain unaffected. In Penelope Lively’s *The Whispering Knights* the emphasis is less on the individual family histories of the children than on the history of the village they are trying to save, but a scene in which Martha Timms walks past a tombstone where “the carved cherubs still joined hands above the name of Ebenezer Timms, died 1836,” (150) serves to remind the reader of Martha’s birthright to this space. Although Alan Garner’s books *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* and *The Moon of Gomrath* feature child protagonists who are strangers to the landscape, they are set in Alderley Edge, the area where the author’s own family has lived for several generations (Philip 11). The area features in several of Garner’s works, notably *The Stone Book Quartet*, a collection of four short novels

(published 1976–79) which documents incidents in the life of a particular Alderley Edge family over several generations.

Of all of these books it is the earliest, *A Grass Rope*, in which this sense of deriving identity from the land is seen as a wholly positive thing. The right of the Owlands to the land remains uncontested throughout the book, and the children's increased understanding of the past only increases this sense of belonging. Although the main settings for the book are a farm and an inn, we see no characters other than the children themselves, their families and a solitary farm worker so that there is no one to contest the notion that the two families belong to the land and the land to them.<sup>19</sup> In later works, however, the relationship between landscape and identity is no longer this straightforward. Butler identifies “a notable convention of British children's fantasy fiction of the 1950s and 1960s [in which] mysteries that have eluded the locals for centuries will yield their secrets to visiting middle-class children (usually from London) within a couple of days of arrival” (*Four British Fantasists* 111), and this criticism might well be applied to some of the books under consideration here—particularly *The Weirstone of Brisingamen* and *Over Sea, Under Stone*. However, in most of these later books the relationship of the characters to the landscape, and their ability to consider themselves local, is shown to be fraught, and is often contested even by the text itself.

This is nowhere more clear than in *Greenwitch* (1974), the third book in Cooper's Dark Is Rising sequence, in which questions of belonging and outsider-ness are constantly raised. The book sees the return of the Drew children to Trewissick, the village featured in *Over Sea, Under Stone*, along with Merriman Lyon, Will Stanton, and Will's uncle and aunt. At first the Drews resent the presence of Will, whom they consider an outsider whose presence will be intrusive. However, as Butler notes, Will is in fact “the *insider* in the struggles of the Light and Dark” (*Four British Fantasists* 116), and actually has a much greater knowledge of these than the children. In an attempt early on to exclude Will, Barney and Simon attempt to position themselves as insiders to Trewissick, claiming that “Everyone knows us here,” and “We shall have a lot of friends to see,” only to have this position

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Hunt describes the “enviably empty” landscape of the camping and tramping novel (*Introduction* 122). Hazel Sheeky Bird notes that this particular thread of “English Arcadianism” had increasingly been contested in the period leading up to the Second World War.

undermined by Merriman, who reminds them that their previous visit consisted merely of “two weeks last summer” (26).

The question of who can or cannot be considered native to a place is of particular importance in this book because of the Greenwich of the title, a creature woven from hawthorn by the women of the village and then sent out to sea as an annual ritual. The making of the Greenwich is a ceremony which can be attended only by local women. Will’s aunt, the American Fran Stanton, is not invited to attend the ceremony because “She’s a furriner, you see. Tisn’t fitting” (36). Mrs Stanton responds to her exclusion by praising the local community for adhering to its traditions:

“It’s just wonderful the way these old customs are kept up,” she said. “And I think it’s great they wouldn’t let a foreigner watch. So many of our Indians back home, they let the white man in to watch their native dances, and before you know it the whole thing’s just a tourist trap.” (92)

Simon Drew clearly resents Mrs Stanton’s almost anthropological approach (she plans to give a paper on the subject to her travel group) towards local tradition. (““The natives and their quaint old customs,’ Simon said.”) His sister Jane is more sympathetic, but there does appear to be an implicit critique in the novel of Mrs Stanton’s fetishizing of authenticity in local tradition, so that it too becomes a product for the outside observer to consume—Mrs Stanton’s major complaint about the non-exclusivity of Native American practices seems to be that outsiders like herself feel cheated by them. Meanwhile, Jane’s own presence at the Greenwich ceremony is contentious—though she is British, she is not from Cornwall, and in this sense is regarded as an outsider by the women of the village. Her connection to Merriman is cited as the reason for her inclusion, though none of the books within the sequence have thus far suggested that Merriman himself is regarded as a local. In a sense, it is Mrs Stanton’s position as an outsider that allows the text to construct Jane as a relative insider to Trewissick, but these positions of outsider/insider are not fixed and can easily be challenged.

I have already mentioned Alan Garner’s frequent return to the village of Alderley Edge in his fiction. Maureen Kincaid Speller suggests that Garner’s precision in continually marking out his native landscape reveals a deep anxiety over his own place in it. She notes that his life has been marked by “a series of estrangements [...] spatial, cultural, intellectual, and temporal, and they provide the driving force for his fiction” (“Fusion”). The estrangement

described by Speller has most often been connected to the elite education—Garner was a “scholarship boy” who also attended Oxford University (Takiuchi 1)—that has disrupted his relationship with his geographically- and socially-rooted heritage (Fimi, *Celtic Myth* 171).<sup>20</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that questions of displacement recur throughout Garner’s fiction. The family at the centre of *Elidor*, discussed in the previous chapter, begin the book by moving to a new and strange home; in *Red Shift* the estrangement of Tom (another “scholarship boy”) from his surroundings is further signified by the fact that he lives in a caravan. Speller suggests that, by addressing these characters’ displacement, Garner is actively creating and remaking a native Cheshire for himself:

The detailed topographical descriptions of Alderley Edge, Barthomley, Mow Cop and Thursbitch, attest to a deep knowledge of the locale, but accompanied by the frequent incantatory recitation of place names, they seem to do more than simply provide context. [...] These strings of names are no longer route markers but a beating of the bounds, an establishing of boundaries and edges; they are the activity of the boundary-walker, the *mearcstapa* that Garner describes in his essays. (“Fusion”)

Garner thus appears to be engaged in a project to reinscribe himself into the domestic landscape, much as the earlier writers of camping and tramping fiction (and, as Speller notes, with similarly colonialist overtones). However, while those earlier landscape fictions offer the possibility of locating a personal and national identity within the land, in Garner’s work, as with his contemporaries, the position of the characters in their landscapes never ceases to be fraught and deeply uncomfortable.

This is evident in *The Owl Service*, a novel in which questions of ownership and insider status in the landscape are complex and shifting.<sup>21</sup> The novel is set in a Welsh valley in a country home owned by an English family and staffed by Welsh servants. Unlike many of the country house fantasies mentioned in the previous chapter, in *The Owl Service* the class and colonial contexts of the country house are an acknowledged part of the characters’ own lives. The novel centres on three teenagers—the upper-class English girl Alison, who is the legal owner of the house and whose mother has recently remarried; her English stepbrother Roger, whose father is “not even a gentleman” (119); and Gwyn, the Welsh son of the

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<sup>20</sup> For a detailed reading of Garner’s work from this perspective, see Haru Takiuchi, “Scholarship Boys and Children’s Books: Working-Class Writing for Children in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s” (PhD thesis, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> There is not space here to address the equally fraught question of Garner’s appropriation of the Welsh myth, as an English writer.

housekeeper who is native to the valley. These tidy demarcations of class and nationhood are, however, complicated by the fact that Gwyn's mother, Nancy, had an affair with the previous owner of the house, Alison's uncle, and believes that she might easily have inherited it if they had married, while Gwyn himself is the biological son of Huw Halfbacon, treated by the local community as "something between 'sir' and 'master' and 'father'—respectable and friendly, very clannish" (139). Huw himself challenges the English characters' ownership of the valley, declaring that "their name is on the books of the law, but I own the ground, the mountain, the valley" (100), yet English ownership shapes the life of the valley—Gwyn claims that most of the houses are empty because so many English use them as holiday cottages that the locals cannot rent them.

This is Gwyn's first visit to the valley, yet he appears to know much more about it than does Alison, who has been "coming here all my life" (123) but whose class and English background set her apart from the ordinary life of the valley. Gwyn's knowledge in part comes from stories his mother has told him, but the revelation that he is Huw's son, and therefore in some sense the heir to the valley, raises the possibility that the knowledge is in some way inherent to him. This is particularly the case since, as the novel progresses, we discover that Gwyn is only the latest in a long line of ancestors who have each been doomed to play out the interpersonal dynamics of an ancient myth, included in the Math ap Mathonwy branch of the Mabinogion. According to the myth, Blodeuwedd is created out of flowers in order to be a wife for Lleu Llaw Gyffes, but instead falls in love with Gronw Pebyr. Gronw attempts to kill Lleu; Lleu is restored to life by his father Gwydion and kills Gronw; finally, Blodeuwedd is punished by being turned into an owl. Gwyn, Alison and Roger are the most recent generation to face this ordeal, and the surviving members of its previous iteration, Gwyn's parents, are seen to be deeply damaged by it.

Gwyn's feelings towards his Welsh and working class heritage are complex, but he is well aware of them as *practical* disadvantages, claiming that "I've got to get out of this place. There's nothing here but sheep" (128). Both Gwyn's "real" and mythic heritages, then, are experienced as burdens rather than sources of meaning. While Garner describes elsewhere "the reciprocity of belonging, of 'owning and being owned' by a place" (quoted in Butler, *Four British Fantasists* 110), Gwyn's complex relationship with the valley, and the heritage it represents, threatens to destroy him.



In earlier chapters I discuss what Jed Esty describes as “a wider intellectual current in thirties Britain, one that carried the methods and protocols of imperial knowledge homeward, where they became available techniques for self-representation” (174). As I have discussed, in the camping and tramping genre as well as certain works of children’s fantasy, colonial ways of knowing and producing knowledge about the land were turned inwards towards the British landscape. The frequent appearance of what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “monarch of all I survey” pose, adopted by the child protagonists of these texts, suggests a “fantasy of dominance” (Bird, “Camping and Tramping” 122) over the landscape.

Yet, as I’ve shown in my analysis of Alan Garner’s *Elidor* in the previous chapter, by the 1960s and 1970s the intellectual current that Esty describes has been replaced with a sense of the collapse of the imperial systems of understanding which had previously allowed British child characters to look upon and possess the terrain. This can clearly be seen in the attitudes of the protagonists of these later children’s novels towards the lands which they observe. In *Elidor*, the secondary world is mutable and threatening—in the fantasies discussed here, the British landscape too is an increasingly uncertain space. William Mayne’s *It* begins with a scene very like those described by Bird and Pratt. Alice Dyson waits at the top of a hill and looks out across the local landscape. Mayne describes this landscape as one that is familiar to Alice, so that it is a matter of some surprise that she notices for the first time a hill that she has never noticed before. She then notices something more startling:

[The Minster] seemed to have fallen into ruin, as if the sunlight just now upon it had truly been a flame that has destroyed it. It had no roof, and the windows gaped empty, the sky beyond showing through them. There was no mistake about it: Alice had seen numbers of ruined abbeys eaten out by time, and this was the very appearance. (9)

However, while the Minster might have “the very appearance” of a ruined abbey, the whole thing has been a trick of the light.

Nothing had happened at all. The sky beyond it was the same colour as the lead roof, so that from this distance one merged into the other: and the windows, by some trick of light, and because they were half made of lead too, had looked like openings to the same sky. Still, she thought, it did fall into ruin, and just for me. (10)

This minor incident at the beginning of the book is significant for a number of reasons—both the hill and the Minster play important roles in the story to come. Most importantly, however, the act of looking out across the landscape as an act of power is undermined—though Alice, unusually, appears to feel some satisfaction in the experience. In a similar scene in Mayne’s earlier novel *Earthfasts*, Keith Heseltine is standing on a hill and looking out across the moor when he sees what appears to be a giant. “Keith moved his head. He was sure there was an optical illusion. The man must be on a nearer ridge whose colour and perspective ran into the distant hill-side. But it was not so” (77). In these later novels, then, the “fantasy of dominance” or knowledge of the landscape to which Pratt refers is stripped away, even from protagonists who are native to their surroundings, and whose familiarity with the local landscape is emphasized. The books discussed in this chapter contain a number of instances in which benign landscapes are suddenly rendered alien and threatening. Early in Alan Garner’s *The Moon of Gomrath*, for example, Colin and Susan find their familiar walk home suddenly changed.

Whether the change was in themselves or in the wood, Colin and Susan felt it. The Edge had suddenly become, not quite malevolent, but alien, unsafe. And they longed to be clear of the trees: for either the light or nerves, or both seemed to be playing still further tricks on them. (21)

The protagonists of *Earthfasts* experience something similar:

[...] all at once the surroundings were changed. The friendly wood on Haw Bank, where he had walked alone on many autumn evenings as darkness came, where he had made solitary snow huts in winter, now looked like the threatening edge of the world, a wall that should not be looked at [...] They both felt they were at the hearth of cold hell, and that the whole world was being torn at their feet. (7)

Features of the landscape may, additionally, hide the presence of enemies. In *The Moon of Gomrath* the dwarf Uthecar learns of the return of the shape-shifting Morrigan when he lifts a stone to create a shelter for himself and “the stone put arms about my neck, and was throttling the life of me!” In *Over Sea, Under Stone* the children are up on the headland at night and see something that they mistakenly believe to be a standing stone.

It seemed to swell as the wind blew, so that suddenly they saw that it was no stone, but the tall figure of a man all in black, with a long cloak that swirled in the wind as he turned towering over them. For an instant the moonlight caught his face as he turned, and they saw eyes shadowed under dark jutting brows, and the flash of white teeth in

what was not a smile. Jane screamed, terrified, and hid her face in Simon's shoulder.  
(119)

Increasingly, then, the landscape is revealed to be a changeable, and even hostile space over which the child characters can exert no control. Furthermore, several of the books discussed in this chapter suggest that it is instead the landscape that exerts control over the characters, often in sinister and damaging ways.

In *The Owl Service*, for example, the text suggests that the persistence of the myth can be linked to the physical contours of the land. Observing the shape of the valley, Alison notes that she “can see why these valleys make good reservoirs” (136).<sup>22</sup> Gwyn agrees, suggesting that the valley *is* a reservoir, not of water, but of the force that keeps the story repeating itself.

“I don't think it can be finished,” said Gwyn. “I think this valley really is a kind of reservoir. The house, look, smack in the middle, with the mountains all around, shutting it in, guarding the house. I think the power is always there and always will be. It builds up and builds up until it has to be let loose—like filling and emptying a dam.”  
(138)

This conversation takes place while the two characters are on a high hill looking down at the valley, but there can be no fantasy of dominance here. The valley becomes a physical representation of the power that is controlling the interactions between Gwyn, Alison and Roger, by forcing them into the roles of Lleu, Gronw and Blodeuwedd. Later in the book, as Gwyn attempts to escape his role in the myth by physically fleeing the valley, the land itself intervenes and prevents him from doing so (186).

If the valley exerts control over Gwyn by immobilising him, in the case of Alison this control takes the form of a supernatural possession. Alison is not the only character in this set of fantasies to be possessed by some force connected with the landscape. I have already mentioned Penelope Lively's *The Whispering Knights* in the context of such possession. In Lively's novel the village of Steeple Hampden is in some sense haunted by the malignant presence of Morgan Le Fay, who “was here [...] for a time” (16). Later in the book she takes

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<sup>22</sup> Alison's statement seems to be a reference to Capel Celyn, a village in the Tryweryn Valley in North Wales, flooded in 1965 in order to create a reservoir to supply water to Liverpool and the Wirral. The incident caused a great deal of outrage in Wales, and spurred on the nationalist movement, of which it has continued to be a major symbol (Griffiths 450). It's unsurprising, then that Gwyn comments that this is “not the most tactful remark” (136).

control of Martha, one of the three protagonists, kidnapping her and causing her to become entirely passive. Despite the presence of the witch, in *The Whispering Knights* the land itself is not inherently sinister. In fact the threat in the book is *to* the landscape—Morgan, disguised as a rich industrialist’s attractive young wife, is manipulating her husband into building a motorway through the village, thus ruining the valley. In the final confrontation between Morgan and the land (represented by the standing stones, supposedly transfigured from Arthurian knights), the children are relieved to discover that “the Stones have won” (143). The land itself thus fights off the malign influence which controls it. It is telling, however, that even this book, which aligns the children with their local landscape and dramatises a fight to save it, the themes of possession and dominance of the children by the space may still be seen.

From the beginning of Sheena Porter’s *Nordy Bank*, the hills among which the children camp are imbued with the possibility of danger, a fact in which the children appear to take some pleasure. On their first evening in the camp, Robin “deliberately blurred his eyes until the hills began to move against the sky, pretending they were alive and frightening himself” (17), while Margery, reminding the others of the area’s bloody history, has a “sinister watching and waiting feeling” and claims that she “*feel[s]* the sleeping war” (18). Bron worries that the hill is watching her, but “It was such a big hill: it wasn’t watching her, little Bronwen Owen sitting in its lap to look at the view. The Brown Clee was watching Wales and all the hills in between” (22). While Bron is able to reassure herself that she is not the target of the hill’s gaze, the scene opens up the possibility of the landscape as the watcher and the British child as the subject of its gaze. This constitutes an inversion of the relationship between the two as it is set up in the adventure and camping and tramping traditions, where it is the child who gazes upon and acts upon the landscape. Thus agency is further stripped from the child protagonist.

Of the six children who go to camp on the Brown Clee, the one most strongly affected by the landscape and the atmosphere it conjures up is Bron, who, we are informed, is half-Welsh. Shortly after their arrival at Nordy Bank, Bron begins to act strangely, preferring to stay at the campsite by herself, and increasingly seeming to identify with the inhabitants of the Bronze-Age settlement whose remains the children find on the hill. She appears to refer to herself as one of them, claiming that, for example, “*we* made the banks” (33, my emphasis),

and later expressing great anxiety at the other children's suggestion that they sleep outside the protection of the settlement. The power that is now controlling her leads to her acting in ways alien to her true character—while she ordinarily loves dogs, her reaction to an escaped Alsatian, approaching the camp for food, is violent and afraid; she becomes a Bronze-Age settler faced with a wolf. Later, once she has quelled her earlier reaction and as the dog sleeps near her, she finds herself inadvertently raising her arm to kill it.

The horror of Bron's situation is in the fact that her character has changed—she seems unable to control her voice or body. “It was as if she were acting in a silent film, her own voice being shut off, to be instantly replaced by a dubbed voice, saying things with which she had no connexion, which she herself would never have said because she wasn't that sort of person” (56). Later, trying to explain her treatment of the dog Griff to her friend Margery, she adds that “I seemed to have a memory that wasn't mine and something in my body that wasn't me” (82). Bron's loss of self appears to be connected in some way with her Welsh identity. Though all the children live close to the border between England and Wales, Bron is the only one to have Welsh ancestry—or at least the only one whose ancestry is revealed by the text—and both she and the other children seem very aware of this difference. Early in the book, while reciting Housman's poem “The Welsh Marches,” Bron hurriedly disclaims the sentiments described by the poem, claiming that the words are not an expression of her own feelings. “‘It's not me,’ she said quickly. ‘It's the words. Housman wrote it’” (18)<sup>23</sup>. The incident suggests that Bron is self-conscious about being thought (as Peter describes her) a “native.” Bron's family has in fact only recently moved to Shropshire—the deep connection with the land that the book suggests thus appears to be entirely the result of her Welsh ancestry—“race” rather than “place”, in Baucom's terms. Bron's susceptibility to the influence of Nordy Bank is thus presented as a product of her Welshness, a violent heritage that is thrust upon her against her will. In this sense, she is in a situation similar to that of Garner's Gwyn.

William Mayne's *It* features yet another case of the supernatural possession of a character by the landscape. At the beginning of the book Mayne's protagonist, Alice, compelled by some force she doesn't understand, partially unearths a stone pillar from

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<sup>23</sup> The use of Housman's poem, taken from *A Shropshire Lad*, is significant. The verses that Bron recites are written in the voice of a character with dual English and Welsh ancestry, and collapse the difference between the land itself and the descendant who has inherited this history (“on the marches of my breast”).

beneath the ground, and in so doing releases the titular “IT” (always capitalised within the text), a spirit which attaches itself to her for the next several months. As in the intrusion fantasies discussed in the previous chapter, the irruption of IT into the world is treated as a horror narrative—the spirit first manifests as a ghostly dry hand which grips Alice’s own, and whose touch she continues to feel for the next several months. Having taken partial possession of Alice’s body, the spirit haunts her, committing minor destructive acts in the home and expressing great rage when Alice attempts to enter the Minster where her grandfather preaches.

As I mention above, in *It* the landscape that Alice gazes out upon is mutable and deceptive, disrupting the convention that constructs the landscape as something to be looked at, and of the child protagonist as the viewer. Here, as in *Nordy Bank*, this reversal of agency is signified by a suggestion that the landscape is looking back at the child. On Alice’s first visit to the Eyell, the hill where the mysterious stone is buried, she feels “safe from all visitations: no one knew where she was”. However, immediately after this we are told that “where she was had become known, and there was a visitation” (24). On her second visit she sees, through a gap in the stone, “that beyond place looked at her with an eye. [...] Alice could see in it the shine of eye, and the clear oblong through which it looked and her own diminished and globed reflection with the sky behind her” (53). The image of an eye from another world looking out at the British child also recalls Alan Garner’s *Elidor*, discussed in the previous chapter. In *Elidor*, the vision of the secondary world looking back is presented to us as terrifying—and, as I have demonstrated, the presentation of these fantastic secondary worlds is embedded in conventions relating to the depiction of imperial space. In thus reversing the dynamics of power between the primary and secondary worlds, *Elidor* marks a shift in Britain’s relationship with its former colonies. In *It*, however, the eye is embedded in the *domestic* landscape, suggesting an increasingly uncomfortable relationship with the land even within the British Isles.

Like Bron, Alison and Gwyn, Alice’s selfhood is threatened by the force that has overtaken her. Not only does she find herself being controlled by an alien force, but throughout the book she is continually having to assert her own presence in the face of forces that seem about to erase it—most notably, throughout the book other characters continually

mishear or mispronounce her name, so that eventually she appears as “Alison Dyerson” in a local newspaper (107).

In the previous chapter I described Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “unhomely”, the breaking down of the barriers between the world and the private, domestic space. In the landscape fantasies discussed above, the land, and the history that it represents, continually breach the selfhoods of the protagonists. The fantastic nature of these texts means that this breaking of barriers is a literal one—alien forces enter into the minds and bodies of these child characters, causing them to lose control of themselves. Bhabha locates the source of this unhomeliness in “the relocation of the home and the world [...] that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (*Location* 13). What can be seen in these books is a series of landscapes that are haunted by presences from outside the characters’ experience; the something that should not be present but is (and has always been). Furthermore, this presence is one that cannot be named. Tracing the unhomely in a series of literary works, including those of Henry James, Toni Morrison, Nadine Gordimer, and Rabindranath Tagore, Bhabha constantly returns to such descriptors as “unspeakable,” or “unnamed.”

*It* seems particularly appropriate to such a reading, its very title signifying the unnameable nature of the presence at its centre. While Alice is unusual among these protagonists in that she is able to feel some pity for the creature possessing her, and though we are aware that IT was in some way connected with a witch who died violently, the book never makes clear IT’s provenance, the details of the incident in which it was involved centuries ago, or the logic of the ritual Alice evolves to free herself of IT. Alice cannot make herself understand or is unwilling to face the details whatever has happened in the past, so that the only thing the reader knows is that she is overwhelmed by guilt and horror over that long-ago incident.

Alice’s throat was wanting to explain about slaying a witch, but it even had trouble telling Alice because for one thing she knew and for another she didn’t want to know. You don’t want to know about the murder you have committed when it is quite impossible for you to have done it and there is no victim and you weren’t there at the time either. (81–82)

Alice’s earlier thought, that “you can’t not think of something; it always comes back. So for the time being she had an unreal thing with a real memory” (37) articulates a feeling of unease

that suffuses the whole of the book, and whose cause is only ever identified as the remnant of a violent local history whose presence continues in the land itself. The very stratification that sought to locate history and therefore meaning in the landscape has made it a profoundly uncomfortable space in which to be.

Most of the books discussed in this chapter do however suggest the possibility of a resolution that will allow the characters to escape the hold of land (and history) upon them and restore them to themselves. *Nordy Bank* closes with Bron's thought that "Nordy Bank was there, but it belonged to the hill's past now, and she belonged to herself" (122); in *The Whispering Knights* Morgan is defeated, and in *It* Alice is able to work out the ritual that will cause IT to leave her. *The Owl Service* is something of an exception here. Gwyn, who is presented throughout as the hero of the narrative, is ultimately unable to put aside his feelings of hurt and anger in order to save Alison, while Roger, who has appeared in a far less sympathetic light, is the one to put his own needs aside in order to do what is necessary. Neil Philip notes that many readers have considered this a betrayal of the character as well as of the implied contract between text and reader (71). Yet Gwyn's failure is effective precisely because it is shocking—once again he is immobilised by the weight of his heritage.

John Stephens identifies in children's literature a "central preoccupation [...] with the nature of selfhood and its relationship to place" (56). As has been discussed in previous chapters, in the children's literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the colonies provide a conceptual space within which the child protagonist can travel outwards, be tested, and develop a sense of self that is in part constructed through the character's ability to claim, or solve, or exert power upon the land. I further demonstrate that with the decline of empire new narrative spaces must be conceived of in which the child character can exert agency. What can be seen repeatedly in this later set of landscape fantasies, however, is a *loss* of agency—child protagonists whose ability to act is stripped away. Significantly, many of these texts also end on a note that emphasises the children's loss of power. *The Moon of Gomerath* closes on the bleak image of Susan, left behind and "forlorn" by the magical forces in whose train she desperately wishes to be (213); *Silver on the Tree* with the Drews and Bran having their memories stripped from them; *The Owl Service* with Gwyn, who "was hurt too much" to act to save Alison (217). Though several of these texts offer more hopeful endings (Alice, Bron and Roger are able to find solutions to their problems, while *Silver on the Tree*



also ends with an exhortation to action now that the Old Ones are no longer there to protect humans), they show us children liberating themselves from the landscape rather than exerting agency upon it.

In the context of Ian Baucom's claim, that this period sees a shift in the understanding of national identity as formed by space to one in which it is constituted by race, this is significant. I began this chapter by arguing that the landscape fantasies of the 1960s and 1970s turn inwards towards the British landscape, myth, and pre-imperial history as less fraught spaces for the creation of identity in the wake of empire. As the texts discussed later in the chapter show, this attempt to elide the imperial past is unsuccessful; the presence of Britain's imperial others within the domestic space, as well as an understanding of the violent history embedded in the landscape increasingly cause that landscape to become a threatening and disorienting space. Rather than embedding the child characters in their local landscapes, these books dramatise their struggle to escape it. Instead of being a stable site for the formation of individual and national identities, the domestic space is shown to actively strip these stable identifiers away from the protagonists, so that they are left fighting for control of their own names, minds and bodies. Space, then, can no longer serve as the foundation for British identity.

## Conclusion

A detailed analysis of twentieth century British children's literature in the context of empire has until now been lacking. Existing children's literature criticism of this period has tended to focus on the contexts of the two World Wars, and the massive social and political changes taking place within the British Isles during this period—though the importance of fiction as a tool for renegotiating the past and developing cultural identities has long been recognised within this body of work, the *imperial* past has rarely formed a part of this analysis. Nor is empire explicitly present or even mentioned in many of the novels analysed here; while imperial narratives form the acknowledged context for Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* series, for example, the later works discussed in Chapters Five and Six, and those set in secondary worlds (discussed in Chapters Three and Four) rarely if ever allude to an imperial heritage. This reticence about the end of empire is not unique to children's literature. As Bill Schwarz has noted, relatively few British writers have attempted to directly address the issue of decolonisation, but the connections between the novel and the end of empire are multifarious (21). Similarly, imperial ideology remains central to the children's literature of postimperial Britain. This becomes apparent when these texts are read according to Edward Said's model of "contrapuntal" reading; reading which requires a "simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (59). Said further describes his task as "a kind of geographical inquiry into historical experience" (6). This thesis has taken upon itself a similar task. In interrogating and examining the presences of the imperial legacy in a key aspect of British cultural life—children's literature—the thesis follows on from the work done by Said and Simon Gikandi among others, as well as the more recent activism of the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa and the United Kingdom. Through an analysis of the spatial politics of the texts examined here, I have proposed a reading of British children's literature as a body of work through which space is established as a site for the formation of national identity and have further located this reading in the context of British imperial history. I have traced the lingering presence of empire in these texts, as well as shown that the interplay between "imperial" and "domestic" conceptions of space underlies the canonical children's literature of the period 1930–1980. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that the instability to "British" space over the period of decolonisation leads to a similar instability in the formation of national identity.

An analysis of genre has been central to this argument. In demonstrating the centrality of such narrative forms as the adventure story to these major works of fantasy, I also show that these works retain in some measure the spatial politics and ideology of the genres from which they originate. Frederic Jameson has proposed a “model of formal *sedimentation*” (original emphasis, 126) for the reading of genre, whereby he suggests that, “in its emergent, strong form a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms, that form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right. When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally reckoned into the new form” (127). I propose that, in Jameson’s terms, the adventure narrative is an ideological form that normalises a particular appropriation of space by the European subject. My analysis of the functions of space in such narratives is informed by Foucault’s concept of heterotopia. Subsequently, the reading I offer here of such major canonical works of children’s fantasy as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* and C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* reveals a complex interplay between the imperial gaze constructed by the genre and the challenges to these spatial politics that are posed by the process of decolonisation.

Two “movements” are marked by this thesis. The first of these is that mentioned in the title, “There and Back Again”—the shift from the outward movement of narratives of empire which expanded into what I have called “imperial space,” to an inward-looking body of literature which, with the contraction of the British empire during the period of decolonisation, locates meaning in the domestic landscape of the British isles. I trace a broad chronological shift between these two movements—whereas Arthur Ransome’s “fantasies” draw their imaginative power from sources such as castaway islands and Chinese pirates, those of Alan Garner draw from the local landscape and mythology. However, it is impossible to neatly divide these texts into fantasies concerned with “There” and those concerned with “Back Again.” As I have demonstrated, particularly in the early chapters of this thesis, these two contradictory impulses towards an outward and an inward movement are simultaneously present in several of these works. The Swallows and Amazons’ project of imperial exploration in the Lake District has the result of bringing them into a closer relationship with the English landscape, while C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia* at times functions as imperial space and at others as an idealised England. As I demonstrate in Chapter Five in particular, these outward and inward gazes are not only coterminous, but are also thoroughly intertwined. The Empire

is always already present in the home—both in the material as well as the figurative sense, British domesticity is constituted by the availability of imperial space.

In the postimperial world, however, these spatial categories are further disrupted by the phenomenon of immigration from the former colonies to the British Isles; increasingly, as I show in Chapter Six, defined as the new national space. As Britain's former colonial subjects begin to arrive on "British" soil, we see the domestic space (whether that be the domestic landscape, as I demonstrate in Chapter Six, or the interior of the family home as in Chapter Five) depicted increasingly as unhomely. I connect this to the "postimperial melancholia" that Paul Gilroy sees as a dominant factor in postimperial Britain, and which is caused by "an inability to face, never mind actually mourn, the profound change in circumstances and moods that followed the end of the Empire and consequent loss of imperial prestige" (*After Empire* 98). Gilroy further distinguishes between this melancholia as a postimperial phenomenon and the melancholy that came to be associated with Empire in the nineteenth century describing the former as the "guilt-ridden loathing and depression that have come to characterize Britain's xenophobic responses" to immigrants, and adding that "Victorian melancholy started to yield to melancholia as soon as the natives and savages began to appear and make demands for recognition in the Empire's metropolitan core" (99). In Chapters Five and Six, which are both concerned with fantasy written in the post-Windrush years, I demonstrate that with the visible presence of immigrants, who become the object onto which postimperial melancholia is displaced, Britain is in a sense unhomed. Whereas in previous children's literature, as I have shown, space is central to the formation of identity, from this period onwards the space of the home becomes a site for the guilt and loathing that Gilroy identifies. The other "movement" marked by this thesis, therefore, is a shift away from the possibilities of space as a marker of identity. I have chosen as the end point of this analysis the year 1980. 1981, as I have explained, marked the passing of the Nationality Act, which relocated British identity in patriality rather than territory, and so marked the completion of the transition Ian Baucom describes between "place" and "race." Chapters Five and Six demonstrate the extent of the participation of children's books in this larger cultural shift, and constitute an argument for the centrality of debates around immigration and national identity to these texts. Even as these books increasingly place emphasis on "race" (by reinscribing the territorial boundaries of the British Isles as the space of the nation and characterising immigrant bodies as invaders), they show an increasing discomfort with "space," so that even the local landscape can no longer be a source of stable identity.

Whereas Gilroy speaks of the postcolonial melancholia of the metropole, Simon Gikandi describes the same cultural moment as “the postimperial aporia,” and identifies it as a space of immense possibility for colonised peoples “to chart alternative narratives of their own histories and experiences” (194). A major omission from this project has been the writing of non-white British authors. For reasons I explain in my introduction, this is in large part a result of my desire to restrict this analysis to canonical works, and my use of the Carnegie Medal as a guide. Additionally, while books by BAME and immigrant writers are in any case frequently read in the context of postcolonial or racial concerns, it has been my intention in this project to demonstrate the centrality of those dynamics in texts to which such a critical reading is rarely applied—the fantasy works of white authors in the metropole. However, one of the dangers of a project such as this one, which adheres closely to a literary canon, is that it can, however inadvertently, work to reinscribe or reify that canon. If, as I have explained, the eligibility criteria for the Carnegie Medal have shifted with a shifting understanding of what a “British” book might be, it is also necessary to consider what this canon excludes, and where the limits of its understanding of “Britishness” lie. As of 2017, over eighty years since the Carnegie medal’s inception, it is yet to reward any non-white author. This year in particular, the award faced a great deal of criticism after releasing a longlist which did not include any BAME authors, prompting an inquiry into the evaluation process (Onwumezi, “All-white”). As the Carnegie shortlist is widely “shadowed” by schools, the continued exclusion of BAME authors from this list has also had the effect of excluding them from a wider conversation about British children’s literature. In order that such studies as this one do not further that process of erasure, further work needs to be done.

There is great scope here for an analysis of questions of spatiality in contemporary writing, both by writers of children’s literature from the former colonies and by BAME writers within the metropole. The project also demonstrates the need for a deeper engagement with the dynamics of race and the British children’s canon—a greater scrutiny both of the racial politics of the canon, and of the processes by which it has restricted “Britishness” to a white authorship. This is work that I have already begun.

In addition to its engagement with British children’s literature and the national canon, this thesis is both informed by and intended as a contribution to a wider discussion of the

dynamics of race and empire in science fiction and fantasy criticism, of which a major landmark was the set of online discussions in early 2009, normally referred to as “Racefail ’09” (H. Young 171–182). While other critics have noted the similarities between the spaces of the empire and the fantastic secondary world,<sup>1</sup> and Farah Mendlesohn in particular has mapped out a framework for the relationship between different forms of fantastic spaces, this project builds on this work and on current conversations within the genre, in order to offer new readings of major canonical works, as well as to open up the possibility for more detailed studies of the dynamics of space and identity in secondary world and intrusion fantasies. Moreover, the framework I have proposed, and the insights which it offers about the politics of spatiality, fantasy, and the space of the nation are also broadly applicable to other national contexts (for example, it offers an enlightening lens through which to read several recent Indian fantasy films).

Finally, this project addresses an increasingly urgent aspect of our current cultural moment. Writing in 1996, Simon Gikandi suggests that “the crisis of Englishness in the present period is symptomatic of the incomplete project of colonialism, for it calls attention to the fate of powerful cultural categories forced—by decolonization and the demise of empire—to exist outside the historical conditions that made them possible” (9). Over two decades later, as recent political events have demonstrated, the “crisis” described by Gikandi remains unresolved. It is perhaps significant that recent years have seen a number of attempts to grapple with Britain’s imperial heritage. In 2015–2016, a major exhibition at the Tate gallery was titled *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain’s Imperial Past*. 2015 also saw the airing of a popular British television series titled *Indian Summers*, set in 1930s British India. 2017 has thus far seen *two* films set partly in British-ruled India; Gurinder Chadha’s *The Viceroy’s House*, set during the partition of India and Pakistan, and Stephen Frears’ *Victoria and Abdul*, which documents Queen Victoria’s relationship with an Indian servant, Abdul Karim. Few of these have been entirely successful—the Tate exhibition was criticised on the grounds that it shied away from “facing” the extent of imperial violence,<sup>2</sup> while Indian and Pakistani reviewers of Chadha’s film condemned its apportioning of the bulk of the blame for the

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<sup>1</sup> The science fiction writer Nalo Hopkinson, for example, notes that “the fantasy land is the colonised land, and the fantasy is of the coloniser being helplessly apprehended and seduced/kidnapped into the colonised land rather than being a marauder” (quoted in Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, 149).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the roundtable discussion hosted by *Third Text*, which included insightful critiques by Louis Allday (“On (Not) Facing Britain’s Imperial Past at Tate Britain”, <http://thirdtext.org/allday-artist-empire>) and Jessyca Hutchens (“Ambiguous Narratives: Artist and Empire at Tate Britain”, <http://thirdtext.org/hutchens-artist-empire>) among others.

tragedy to the Indian and Pakistani characters.<sup>3</sup> These attempts at coming to terms with imperial history seem to bear out Gilroy's lament that when colonial history is invoked in popular culture it is usually "whitewashed" or "sanctified" (*After Empire* 3), yet their increasing presence in popular culture suggests a resurgence of empire as a national concern. That this resurgence should occur at a time when the boundaries of the British national space are once again being questioned is significant. Recent years have witnessed not only a referendum on Scotland's continued existence as part of the United Kingdom, but the complexities attendant on Britain's exit from the European Union—particularly those concerning the country's border with the Republic of Ireland. Similarly, an anxiety over the presence of immigrants on "national" soil has once again become a central feature of British politics.

In the August of 2016 the Conservative Party MP Heather Wheeler tweeted an image captioned "Empire Goes for Gold," superimposed over a world map with all former British colonies highlighted in pink. The image claimed that "British Empire" had won more gold medals at the 2012 Olympic Games than both "EU (post Brexit)" and the rest of the world combined. Wheeler's tweet, though comical, suggests that an unwillingness to reconcile the memory of empire with the territorial boundaries of postimperial Britain remains a very real issue. Gurminder K. Bhambra has recently suggested that the failure in Britain to reckon with the imperial past can be linked in part to European politics—the period of decolonisation was followed immediately by Britain's entry into the European Economic Community, so that, for Bhambra, it is only with Britain's exit from the European Union that we may now see "the ultimate working out of that imperial past" (Bhambra and Riley, 33). I have described in this thesis a continuing tension caused by ambivalent and inherently contradictory understanding of imperial and national spaces which underpins twentieth century British literature, and more broadly British culture. As these tensions of race, national identity, and space resurface, it becomes all the more necessary to find ways to understand them. I offer this thesis as a partial answer.

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<sup>3</sup> Fatima Bhutto's *Guardian* review of the film notes "the insidious message cloaked behind every line in this unctuous and craven film: India's suffering is India's fault" ("Servile Pantomime").

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