

FISH IN DARK WATER

Intertextuality and Interpretation
In the Work of Diana Wynne Jones

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

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Abstract

Children's fantasy author, Diana Wynne Jones, is known for the complex use of intertextuality in her work. This thesis investigates the question of what intertextuality *does* in her work as a whole. It demonstrates that Jones uses intertextual references figuratively throughout her work to open windows of interpretation for an alert reader that may enhance and illuminate her themes. Intertextuality can take many forms, and Jones employs everything from direct allusion through parody and dialogism and Barthes' 'circular memory of reading'. Jones's allusions are, first of all, subversive, and almost always not simply retellings but demonstrations that traditional story and genre do not necessarily legislate the outcome. Secondly, the cognitive space in which intertextual meaning may be found echoes a Romantic double vision in which both the real and the fantastic may overlap, and which emphasizes the importance of the creative imagination. Intertextual references can be both an analogue for the use of the imagination and a way to develop individual imaginative power through the reading experience. The interpretive world that is opened with the recognition of an intertextual key creates an experience for readers that can be aligned with enchantment and the sublime. Negotiating Jones's enchanted world gives power to readers.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my ‘found family’: the friends who have supported me through this process. I reserve special thanks for Richard Hiebert and Dierdre Baker, who share my love of Diana Wynne Jones and who told me one day at lunch that I should ‘go for it’ if I wanted to do this work, and to Kathryn Pankowski, who has endured endless discussions of fantasy and the sublime over these past years.

I must thank the faculty and administration of Camosun College, Victoria, B.C., my place of employment, who not only approved professional development funding but were endlessly patient in granting unpaid leaves of absence that enabled me to both have the time and pay the fees for this programme.

Above all, I wish to thank my supervisor, Catherine Butler, who has always known what questions to ask and whose advice throughout has been generous and always cogent. She has helped me to navigate this complex journey, and my work is all the better for her editorial suggestions. Any weak points or errors that remain are certainly my own.

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Chapter One: Theoretical Overview

General Introduction

Polly, the heroine of Diana Wynne Jones's novel *Fire and Hemlock*, has been making up stories with her friend Thomas Lynn. In their stories, they have a secret life as heroes, in which they have adventures along with their three companions. They know that they are looking for something called the Obah Cypt, but they don't yet know what it is. In the meantime, Polly reads *The Lord of the Rings* for the first time. Then she reads it for the second time, and the third, and the fourth, and finally, in great excitement, she writes to Mr. Lynn that the Obah Cypt is quite obviously a ring, and she writes him a story in which they all hunt the Obah Cypt in the Caves of Doom and then Hero/Polly destroys it 'with great courage'. Thomas Lynn writes back curtly: 'No, it's not a ring. You stole that from Tolkien. Use your own ideas'.¹ Perhaps there is some irony there, in a novel that is itself in part a retelling of the ballad of Tam Lynn and has both structural underpinnings and thematic base-notes from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (among a long list of other intertextual references). However, what this thesis will show is that there is a wealth of difference between Polly's 'stealing' and the complex use of intertextuality throughout Diana Wynne Jones's work. Many, if not most, of Jones's novels are richly allusive; this thesis will demonstrate that such allusions — and all the varied uses of intertextuality throughout her work — represent a key narrative tactic for Jones, which she employs to explore both the use and the representation of the creative imagination. Previous critical discussion of Jones's intertextuality has tended to cluster around a few texts, most notably *Fire and Hemlock* itself and *Hexwood*. This will be the first, and, to the date of writing, the only, comprehensive full-length study of Jones's use of intertextuality, in which the intention is to move far beyond the intellectual game of 'source spotting', which

¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *Fire & Hemlock* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 192-93.

Farah Mendlesohn has rightly argued ‘kills the tale’.² Daniela Caselli, in the context of critical responses to the Harry Potter books, notes the way our discussion of intertextuality mediates ‘core preoccupations about literary value, originality, and authority’. It is ‘no wonder’, Caselli writes, ‘that many critics use intertextuality as a way to justify their role as cognoscenti belonging to a long tradition’. Indeed, she argues, ‘few critics pause to think about what allusions and quotations *do* in the text, and what the implications are of claiming that this constitutes an addition of value’.³ That, in essence, is what this thesis is about.

I approach Diana Wynne Jones’s texts as a reader who, even as a child, was attracted to works that have their origins, or some part of their origins, in other texts. For example, I remember seeking out the stories of the *Mabinogion* after reading Lloyd Alexander’s Prydain books or Alan Garner’s *The Owl Service*, and being excited by the process of discovery. I was not fortunate (or young) enough to have read Jones as a child; I came to her work as a young adult, already studying literature in graduate school. Now, many years later, I study them as a scholar with a background in twentieth century metafiction, relatively new to the field of children’s literature but none-the-less still interested in the use and effect of intertextuality. Jones is an ideal subject: her work is laced with references to mythology, British legends, folk traditions, and many literary works. From the beginning, I recognized that Jones’s use of such other texts was never, or seldom, straightforward. She didn’t simply retell a traditional story in modern dress or in a new fantasy setting; her retellings were most often subversive, working ironically against reader expectations. As I attempted to apply various theories of intertextuality to her work, I discovered that no single theory could apply to even one work, and that some of her more complex works exemplified several different

² Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. xxv.

³ Daniela Caselli, ‘Reading Intertextuality, The Natural and the Legitimate: Intertextuality in *Harry Potter*,’ *Children’s Literature, New Approaches*, Ed. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.168-188 (pp. 168, 183).

types. For that reason, one or two works — most notably *Hexwood* — will be featured more than once in the course of the thesis. Although my chapters are loosely structured around specific theories, or ‘types’ of intertextuality, such as allusion, dialogism, parody, word-play and so on, each chapter will, more importantly, focus on an attempt to show what that particular form of intertextuality *does* in the text.

I start with the assumption, then, that intertextual references, or traces from other texts, add meaning to the text. Sometimes, it is possible to determine authorial intention; for example, Jones herself has written keys to some of the intertextual underpinnings for *Fire and Hemlock* and writes fairly explicitly about the figurative effect she intends. However, as I believe she herself would agree, authorial intention does not necessarily legislate any particular reading of a text, nor are questions of intentionality always clear. Another example can illustrate that: Jones was at Oxford when both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were lecturing there. She writes that she learned a lot from Tolkien but downplays the influence of C.S. Lewis. I believe, as we shall see, that there are several places where one can find strong echoes of Lewis in her work which arise from a common approach to a sense of awe and mystery, and of Platonic idealism, although used in fundamentally different ways. Whether these references were conscious or intentional does not really matter in terms of the effect they can have on a reader.

This introductory chapter will provide a survey of critical issues that are of relevance to the study, placing Jones in the context of children’s literature studies and more general literary theory. Critical studies (by others) of Jones’s individual works will largely be addressed as and when those works appear in my chapter discussions.

To date, although Diana Wynne Jones is widely considered to be one of the most imaginative and important writers of fantasy for children in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and although in her lifetime she published more than forty works for children and young adults and two novels specifically for adults, there is surprisingly little critical writing about her. Of three book-length critical studies, only one, Farah Mendlesohn’s *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition*, is devoted exclusively to her work. A

second, by Catherine Butler⁴, investigates Jones as one of the titular *Four British Fantasists*, the other three being Alan Garner, Penelope Lively and Susan Cooper. The third and most recent book by Caroline Webb (2015) discusses Jones along with J.K. Rowling and Terry Pratchett.

The earliest sustained critical response to Jones's work came in 2002, with the publication of a collection of essays: *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*. In her introduction to that collection, co-editor Teya Rosenberg comments on Jones's humorous, compassionate voice 'that pushes readers to think just a bit more deeply while enjoying themselves', and the 'strong sense of narrative and its possible complexities' that underlies her work.⁵ The issues that Rosenberg identifies – questions of power, Jones's deconstruction of the fantasy tradition, the impossibility of defining her work by genre, her appeal across audiences, postmodern tendencies in her work – are those that continue to surface in the ongoing critical discussions. A conference on Jones's work, held in Bristol in 2009, resulted in a published collection of essays in a special issue of *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* published in 2010. Since then, there has been a smattering of essays, along with Caroline Webb's book, mentioned above, as well as a second conference, held in Newcastle in 2014. As noted, critical discussion has tended throughout to cluster around a few works, notably *Fire and Hemlock*, *Hexwood*, and *Howl's Moving Castle. The Homeward Bounders*, which I consider to be one of Jones's most important works, has hardly been discussed at all.

⁴ Although early works by this author were published under the name Charles, I will respect the author's preference by referring to all her works as by 'Catherine Butler'.

⁵ *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Eds. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp.1 and 3.

Fantasy, Metafiction, Metafictional Fantasy

Diana Wynne Jones is primarily a writer of fantasy, and the topic of fantasy opens up several critical debates. There is what Kathryn Hume refers to as a critical ‘blind spot’ regarding fantasy, or non-realistic fiction’;⁶ this is often so much the case that one recent critical work on Jones and two other authors takes as its main thesis the defence of these authors against accusations of ‘escapism’ by arguing that their narrative strategies potentially provide readers with the intellectual and imaginative powers that will help them to negotiate the ‘real’ world.⁷ Hume believes that we need to rethink certain assumptions:

(1) that the essential impulse behind literature is mimesis; (2) that fantasy is a separable and peripheral phenomenon; and (3) that, because separable, it is pure and best defined by exclusion.⁸

Indeed, several critics make what is for this reader a curious distinction between fantasy and realism, arguing that fantasy is always metaphoric whereas realistic fiction is metonymic. To put it in terms of the Lacanian distinction that metaphor is displacement, while metonymy is contiguous, the fantasy world is seen as one step removed from the ‘real’ world, and therefore cannot intersect with it. Brian Attebery asserts that fantasy is ‘a form of literary narrative that is one degree more fictional than fiction’.⁹ He argues that (realistic) fiction works metonymically, and that the metonymic function applies even to setting: ‘even if the locale is invented,

⁶ Katherine Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Response to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen, 1984), Kindle Edition (Loc 166).

⁷ Carolyn Webb, *Fantasy and the Real World in British Children’s Literature* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁸ Hume, Loc 595.

⁹ Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories. Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 20.

the presumption is that one could get there from places in the real world'.¹⁰ He maintains that fantasy is 'inescapably metaphoric' because 'the presence of the impossible blocks a literal reading' and that the characters and their world become an 'iconic stand-in for everyday life, rather than [...] an extension from it'.¹¹ Catherine Butler addresses, and refutes, that specific point when she asks rhetorically whether magic is merely a 'stunt double for the everyday' and argues that fantasy *can* be metonymic, in a view where 'an openness to the possibility of magic is seen as part of an openness to the wonder and strangeness of life in all its aspects'.¹²

Jones's work blurs what I believe to be a false distinction between metaphor and metonymy. Jacques Derrida asks, in 'White Mythology', what is truth: '[truths are] a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage, seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses'.¹³ Derrida highlights the self-reflexivity of the process of philosophical metaphors: that one needs a metaphor to create the metaphor, and that it is impossible to identify a single originary trace. He notes that metonymy and synecdoche are indeed types of metaphor: 'As soon as we admit that in an analogical relation all the terms are already individually set in a metaphorical relation, the whole begins to function, no longer as a sun but as a star, the pinpoint source of truth, of what is proper, remaining invisible, or swathed in night'.¹⁴ Similarly, it is impossible to discuss a

¹⁰ Attebery, *Stories*, p. 20.

¹¹ Attebery, *Stories*, pp. 21-22.

¹² Catherine Butler, 'Now Here: Where Now? Magic as Metaphor and as Reality in the Writings of Diana Wynne Jones', in *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Eds. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 66-78 (p. 66).

¹³ Jacques Derrida and F.C.T. Moore, 'White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy', *New Literary History*, 6:1 (Autumn 1974), 5-74 (p. 15).

¹⁴ Derrida, p. 45.

theory or theories of intertextuality outside of the act of reading or interpreting something intertextually. Jones, in an interview, uses a striking image that in many ways echoes Derrida's: 'I was just thinking if you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that although the actual image is clear enough, the interpretation is infinitely blurred, a sort of enormous rainbow of every possible colour you could imagine'.¹⁵

Others take a psychological rather than hermeneutical approach, seeing fantasy as in some way a product of a disturbed mind, or a way for children or young adults to 'act out' and deal with 'real-life' problems at a step removed from reality; this reading is another variation of the 'metaphoric' view of fantasy. Rosemary Jackson, whose approach is primarily a psychoanalytic one, sees fantasy as an expression of subconscious desires and fears, but makes an exception for novels by writers such as Tolkien and Ursula K. Le Guin, which she describes as 'faery or romance' literature.¹⁶ Fantasy, she argues, is not transcendental; it 'inverts elements of this world' and creates something '*apparently* "new", absolutely "other" and different'.¹⁷ Maria Nikolajeva, who seems to align with some of Jackson's psychoanalytic approach, and with Attebery's view of myth and fantasy as metaphor, does make what might be a useful distinction between myth, fairy tale, and fantasy. Myth, she argues, arises out of a culture that believed it to be true; fairy tale is known by the reader to be untrue, whereas fantasy elides the borders between reality and unreality. Fantasy, she asserts, can be defined as 'a narrative combining the presence of the Primary and the Secondary world'.¹⁸ Alison Waller uses the term 'fantastic realism' to describe works that '[combine] the characters and events of contemporary or recognisable adolescence found within teenage

¹⁵ Diana Wynne Jones *Interview with Judith Ridge*, available <http://misrule.com.au/wordpress/interviews/diana-wynne-jones-interview>.

¹⁶ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

¹⁷ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Maria Nikolajeva, 'Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern,' *Marvels and Tales*, 17:1 (2003) 138-156 (p. 142).

realism with some aspect of the consensually impossible, supernatural or unreal'.¹⁹ Although she argues that the fantastic elements address symbolically certain central aspects of adolescence, such as identity formation and subjectivity, she notes significantly that 'straightforward psychological readings of fantasy do not always provide the fullest interpretations' and that fantastic realism 'prioritizes a reading of the impossible element as authentic'.²⁰

Obviously, fantasy can be metaphoric (although I argue that it is not limited to that interpretation); in the metaphoric view, as Butler argues, characters – and through them readers – are able to deal vicariously with problems at one step removed from their own experiences. So, it is possible to read Jones's *Witch Week*, for example, as a commentary on discrimination or racism. However, Butler notes that things are never so simple in Jones's work. Jones urges readers to 'think this through'. Butler highlights the complexity of Jones's ideas, noting that this particular story is 'clearly leading in other directions too and will quickly outgrow any one-to-one allegorical mapping it may have started out with'.²¹

Another important concept that emerges in critical discussion is that of 'defamiliarization', a term that can be related to the 'hesitation' that Todorov claims is the basis of fantasy,²² or the 'arresting strangeness' that Tolkien requires of it.²³ Catherine Butler equates defamiliarization with the discourse of power and personal autonomy. 'By seeing the world from an unfamiliar perspective, [Jones's] characters are not just given a new epistemological tool with which to view themselves and those around them; they are provided with the means to question prescribed norms of knowledge and behaviour, and to resist those who would

¹⁹ Alison Waller, *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism* (London: Routledge 2009), p. 17.

²⁰ Waller, pp. 19 and 22.

²¹ Butler, 'Now Here', p. 68.

²² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U Press, 1975).

²³ Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories', in *The Monster and the Critics and Other Essays*, Ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983) pp. 109-161 (p. 139).

impose such norms for their own ends'.²⁴ Through the process of defamiliarization, Butler argues, Jones destabilizes notions of 'normal' versus 'exotic' by showing us our own world through strangers' eyes, making 'normal' in Chrestomanci's world equal magical. Butler also notes that Jones blurs genres as a way of providing alternate ways to 'map' the borderlands between magic and the mundane.²⁵ I would also argue that defamiliarization is a concept that can be applied not just to objects in our world, but to our myths, stories, and literary sources: through intertextuality they are seen from a different point of view and become something new.

What critics like Attebery and John Stephens (1992), those who insist on the metaphoric view of fantasy and thus somehow diminish its significance as a way for readers to negotiate the 'real' world, fail to account for is the constructedness of all fiction, 'realistic' or not. The 'magic realism' of writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, or, in children's literature, David Almond, are somehow given a 'pass' of importance and respectability, whereas no less serious but perhaps more playful authors like Jones tend to be overlooked or disparaged. For centuries, authors and artists have wrestled with the relationship between their art and the 'real' world: did not Shakespeare write 'The truest poetry is the most feigning'?²⁶ From the mid-twentieth century onward, one of the central preoccupations of literary metafiction has been the nature of truth and the way that we record history or tell our own stories. Jones's work is predominantly metafictional; almost all of her works have to do with reading, writing, or constructing stories. Farah Mendlesohn notes that the 'overriding issues that shape [Jones's] fantasies are a concern with the power of words, the creation of story, and a sense that the writer is a real and constant presence within the fiction' and that in 'Jones's worlds magic is frequently

²⁴ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies Of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), p. 238.

²⁵ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p.242.

²⁶ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.iii.396-7.

conducted in that liminal space that exists between intention and meaning, literal and metaphorical interpretation'.²⁷

A central preoccupation of Jones's work, as I will demonstrate, is the power and importance of the creative imagination. Her use of both fantasy and metafiction are bound up with that concern, both transcribing and enacting for the reader processes of discovery and creativity. Jones's work foregrounds the importance of the creative imagination both through subject matter and narrative technique; several critics have commented on the way that metafictional writing in general, but perhaps especially fantasy, highlights the imagination. Linda Hutcheon refers to metafiction as a mimesis of process²⁸ and argues: 'There is no *literary* reason why socialist realism should be considered any more novelistic, any more mimetic, than the fantasy fictions of Borges. By claiming that it is nothing but art, nothing but imaginative creation, metafiction becomes more "vital": it reflects the human imagination'.²⁹ Dieter Petzold presents the useful idea that 'fantasy [...] allows for a use of irony that is less a comment on the contradictory nature of the real world than a celebration of the powers of the imagination'.³⁰ Finally, Katherine Hume writes 'fantasy helps activate whatever it is in our minds that gives us the sense that something is meaningful'³¹ and asserts that '[a]ll writing, all composition, is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poiesis'.³²

²⁷ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, pp. 167, 175.

²⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier U. Press, 1980), p. 39.

²⁹ Hutcheon, *NN*, p. 47.

³⁰ Petzold, Dieter, 'Taking Games Seriously: Romantic Irony in Modern Fantasy for Children of All Ages,' in *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations*, Ed. James Holt McGavran (Iowa City: U of Iowa Press, 1999), pp. 87-104 (p. 90).

³¹ Hume, Loc 604.

³² Hume, Loc 687.

The Postmodern

Diana Wynne Jones, then, writes metafictional fantasy. Her work is also often aligned with the postmodern, another disputed and sometimes pejorative term, but one that provides another lens that blurs the critically-imposed borders between fantasy and realism, education and entertainment, self and other. The universe of the postmodern is one that is postulated on uncertainty, on reality as a subjective and shifting entity; this is the universe that Jones depicts in her work, presenting serious themes through nonsense and making nonsense of the tyranny of ‘grand narrative’.

Most simply, Jean Francois Lyotard, one of its earliest theorists, defines postmodernism as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’.³³ He uses both the terms ‘modern’ and ‘postmodern’ transhistorically; that is, he does not define the postmodern as an era from the late nineteen-fifties onwards, but as a sensibility that arose simultaneously with ‘modernity’ or perhaps what we call the Enlightenment, and that is aligned further with developments in science, literature and the arts in the twentieth century.³⁴ Perhaps most importantly for our purposes, he roots postmodernism in concepts of the sublime, which he calls the attempt to present the unrepresentable. He writes: ‘The sublime takes place when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept. We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it. We have the idea of the simple [...] but we cannot illustrate it with a sensible object which would be a “case” of it’.³⁵ Certainly, Lyotard’s notion of ‘presenting the unrepresentable’ accounts for the irony, the self-conscious fictionality and pluralism that are hallmarks of postmodernism.

³³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, ‘Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?’ in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), pp. 138-50 (p. 138).

³⁴ Lyotard, p. 138.

³⁵ Lyotard, p. 146.

It does not necessarily account for the tendency in some Postmodern art to focus on the popular: corporate logos, Disneyland, Campbell's soup cans.

This brings us to the harsh critics of postmodernism, who argue that the culture of postmodernism has resulted in the loss of the individual, creative subject. Because the Subject has come under scrutiny, it has become suspect as no longer able to be determined outside of cultural systems. The natural consequence of that, according to critics like Frederic Jameson, is the death of creativity. Depth has been replaced by surface; originality has been replaced by pastiche. Jameson argues that postmodern culture is an artefact of consumerism, that the radical shift from modernism – which he sees as being at odds with its culture, subversive, ugly and 'anti-social' – is demonstrated by postmodern culture's being institutionalized and 'at one with the official and public culture of Western society'.³⁶

Postmodernism, Jameson argues, is first of all 'what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good' and second 'the consumption of sheer commodification as a process'.³⁷ Jameson sees aesthetic production as being dissolved into commodity production, all under the influence of globalization and American military and economic domination.³⁸ This is of course to some extent even more the case now than when Jameson was writing. Certainly, one can define as 'postmodern' the Disneyfication of culture, or the endless repetition of corporate logos. It is impossible to deny the shallow aspects of much of popular culture – the empty pleasures of so-called Reality TV, for example – but it is possible to find depth within all the apparent surface of the postmodern world. It is interesting to consider that few children nowadays read or encounter fairy tales in any semblance of an 'original' form. Ask most young people about Snow White and they are likely to tell you something based on the Disney version; I'm sure that more are familiar with Disney's *Winnie The Pooh* than A.A. Milne's. Yet, for every dumbed-down, mass-produced fairy tale, there is also something

³⁶ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 4.

³⁷ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. ix-x.

³⁸ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 4-5.

more interesting and more complicated: many children are also familiar with *The Stinky Cheese Man*,³⁹ and some lucky ones may have been given books by one of the many picture-book authors who are deconstructing the form, such as Raymond Briggs, the Ahlbergs, or Anthony Browne, or, more recently, David Weisner or Emily Gravett.

Although John Barth originally referred to the postmodern as the ‘Literature of Exhaustion’, he later revisited the topic, and in his essay ‘The Literature of Replenishment’, argues for a rather more positive view. An artist, he suggests, ‘may not hope to reach and move [...] the lobotomised mass-media illiterates. But he *should* hope to reach and delight, at least part of the time, beyond the circle of what Mann used to call the Early Christians: professional devotees of high art’.⁴⁰

Ihab Hassan, himself one of the champions of Postmodernism, outlines what he calls eleven “definiens” of the term, most of which can be applied to Jones’s work; he lists them as follows:

1. indeterminacy
2. fragmentation
3. decanonisation
4. self-less-ness; depthlessness. He sees this as derived from a Nietzschean notion of the subject being “only a fiction.”
5. the unrepresentable
6. irony: play, interplay, dialogue, allegory, self-reflection
7. hybridisation: parody, travesty, pastiche. The Image or Replica may be as valid as its model. A concept derived from Heidegger of equitemporality – with the breakdown of a grand narrative of History, there is a new relation between historical elements without any suppression of the past in favour of the present.
8. carnivalisation

³⁹ At least those who were children perhaps ten or fifteen years ago; when I asked students in a first-year college class of mine, all of them knew the work.

⁴⁰ John Barth, ‘The Literature of Replenishment’, in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), pp. 172-80 (p. 178).

9. performance, participation.
10. constructionism: “constructs” of reality in post-Kantian “fictions.”
11. immanence: the capacity of mind to generalize itself through symbols.⁴¹

This last is one of the most interesting aspects of postmodernism, and one that is a constant in its definition, whether or not one regards it with favour or disfavour. Immanence is a term that Baudrillard stresses as well; he also demonstrates clearly how, in a postmodern world, our metaphors have changed. It is one of the central characteristics of postmodernism that its conceptual paradigms are derived from late-twentieth century technology. Baudrillard argues that the ‘scene’ and the ‘mirror’ of art no longer exist; they have been replaced by a screen and a network. The images of networking, connections and a non-reflecting interface are generalized from our technology.⁴² As Charles Jencks, one of the ‘soft’ critics of postmodernism, suggests, instead of the mirror and the lamp, we should be considering the continuum, the net, the rhizome and pattern recognition.⁴³ In Chapter Five of this thesis, I will examine in detail one of Jones’s most interesting creations, the ‘mythosphere’, which she uses to visualize the way that myths and stories are transformed over time. Her use of the ‘multiverse’ in many of her books can also be related to these new metaphors.

Another important aspect of postmodernism is that it often represents a new way of looking at the world. It is at the same time a reaction against the certainty of empiricism, a development from post-structural philosophy and psychological movements, and a response to post-Newtonian science, such as quantum physics. Brian McHale introduces a very useful concept, which he adopts from a poet,

⁴¹ Ihab Hassan, ‘Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective’, in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), pp. 196-207 (p. 198).

⁴² Jean Baudrillard, ‘The Ecstasy of Communication’, in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), pp. 151-57 (p. 151).

⁴³ Charles Jencks, ‘The Post-Modern Agenda’, in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), pp. 10-39 (p. 12).

composer and performance artist named Dick Higgins: rather than modernist and postmodernist, we should define the world-views as cognitive and postcognitive. Higgins presents his ideas as follows:

The Cognitive Questions

(asked by most artists of the 20th century, Platonic or Aristotelian till around 1958):

“How can I interpret this world of which I am part? And what am I in it?”

The Postcognitive Questions

(asked by most artists since then):

“Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?”⁴⁴

We will see those questions asked in many of Jones’s works, perhaps most notably *Hexwood*.

The way that postmodernism most often presents this new world view is through pluralism, manifested in its foundation of intertextuality: ‘appropriation, misappropriation, montage, collage, hybridisation, and general mixing up of visual and verbal texts and discourses, from all periods of the past as well as from the multiple social and linguistic fields of the present’.⁴⁵ What we as critics have to reconcile, Susan Rubin Suleiman argues, is the question of whether this pluralistic borrowing is what Fredric Jameson refers to as ‘blank parody’, devoid of any critical impulse or historical consciousness, or whether it has a critical substance and affect. Suleiman recognizes the potential within postmodernism for a kind of ‘anything goes’ nihilism, but, as Linda Hutcheon and Charles Jencks would also argue, postmodernist works can, through their double-codedness and ambiguity,

⁴⁴ Qtd in Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁵ Susan Rubin Suleiman, ‘Feminism and Postmodernism’, in *The Post-Modern Reader*, Ed. Charles Jencks (London: Academy Editions, 1992), 318-32.

challenge culture from within. As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, this is precisely what Diana Wynne Jones accomplishes in her work.

Discussing the postmodern in children's literature, Deborah Thacker argues that the 'postmodern tendency in art and literature [is] a return to or, perhaps, a reinterpretation of the radicalism of a Romantic view of the adult/reader relationship', and she notes that 'challenges to the credibility of the metanarratives of Enlightenment absolutes suggest an impossible relationship between the Romantic images of childhood as essentially innocent, and the post-modern strategies that characterize the most exciting children's literature'.⁴⁶ She also notes that philosophers who discuss the boundaries of postmodernism 'ignore the tendency, in children's literature, to engage in a playful relationship with literary modes in a way that undermines their hierarchical function', and adds that aspects of what we would now identify as the 'carnavalesque' are represented in the works of early authors such as Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, and E. Nesbit.⁴⁷ Although she doesn't discuss Diana Wynne Jones specifically, Thacker argues that '[b]y making use of, rather than being at the mercy of, the post-modern condition, some contemporary children's writers offer powerful positions for their audiences; disrupting expectations of the traditional storytelling modes, and acknowledging children as natural deconstructionist readers'.⁴⁸

Many critics (Attebery, Nikolajeva, Rudd, and Webb, among others) place Jones in the context of a postmodern fantastic, noting the potentially disruptive nature of fantasy, and, of course, many of the stylistic markers of Jones's work, such as intertextuality, metafiction, parody and narrative experimentation, are also considered to be elements of the postmodern, as I have shown. Farah Mendlesohn's main thesis is that Jones's work is 'a sustained metafictional critical response to the fantastic' and that what underlies much of her work is a 'passionate

⁴⁶ Thacker, Deborah Cogan, 'Playful Subversion,' in *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Eds. Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.139-150 (pp. 139-140).

⁴⁷ Thacker, 'Playful Subversion', p. 142.

⁴⁸ Thacker, 'Playful Subversion', p. 141.

response to a confused universe'.⁴⁹ Teya Rosenberg, who makes the intriguing suggestion that Jones's work could be described as magic realism, notes that writers for children have been using a mix of realism and fantasy for most of the twentieth century to suggest that the world is not necessarily the way rationalists describe it.⁵⁰ This idea runs through Jones's work as a whole, represented through her concerns with power, its misuse, and its association with words and language. Susan Ang argues the possibility that Jones's concerns are manifestations of a larger meta-concern: the 'exhaustion' (to use John Barth's term) of the genre of speculative fiction and the need for 'replenishment'. Fantasy, she suggests, has become static: it needs infusion of the 'unstable'.⁵¹

Intertextuality

Ang argues that the 'instability' she sees in Jones's work comes in part through her use and deconstruction of source material, such as myth or other literary works. Farah Mendlesohn notes that Jones's work is allusive and recursive, and that an important element of her critical strategy is the use and re-use (what Mendlesohn refers to as 'remixing') of source material. Mendlesohn's description of Jones's technique of 'impressionism' — 'Jones builds both plot and world in the words not uttered and the background assumed' — captures very neatly Jones's allusive, dialogic technique and its effect on her readers.⁵² Obviously, the central focus of my thesis is intertextuality, and I will argue that Jones's use of it defies a simple definition. We will see that it ranges from simple one-on-one allusion — although this is far from the norm — to a more wide-ranging and broadly dialogic

⁴⁹ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p.xiii.

⁵⁰ Teya Rosenberg, 'Magical Realism and Children's Literature: Diana Wynne Jones's *Black Maria* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* as a Test Case,' *Papers* 11:1 (2001) 14-25 (p. 17).

⁵¹ Susan Ang, 'Dogmata, Catastrophe, and the Renaissance of Fantasy in Diana Wynne Jones,' *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 34: 3 (Sept 2010) pp. 284-302 (p. 285).

⁵² Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p.105.

effect.

The term intertextuality can be infuriatingly vague, but at its most general refers to relationships between texts. Mary Orr writes, ‘Intertextuality is the culminating critical term for processes of cultural interconnectivity centered on the printed text’.⁵³ It may be interpreted broadly – Barthes’s declaration that all texts are ‘already read’⁵⁴ – or narrowly, in the sense that a specific word or phrase in a text may be a direct allusion to another specific antecedent. Interest in intertextuality has arisen naturally out of the development of the postmodern and is intertwined with it. As we have seen, postmodern theory has moved away from a unitary view of the author and a single, authoritative, voice to the notions of double-voice, pluralism, and dialogism, all of which are reflected in the concept of intertextuality. As Thaïs Morgan argues, intertextuality frees the literary text ‘from psychological, sociological, and historical determinisms, opening it up to an apparently infinite play of relationships with other texts, or semiosis’.⁵⁵

Julia Kristeva is credited with coining the term intertextuality, though it is generally recognized that Mikhail Bakhtin developed the concept and that it is in Kristeva’s discussion of Bakhtin’s work that the term is formulated. Bakhtin is known for his concepts of the carnivalesque and of dialogism, articulated in the notion of ‘polyphony’. Bakhtin argues against the idea of a single, dominant authorial voice and proposes that a system of language cannot be removed from its context and is continually influenced by extra-literary texts. Dialogism, in its broadest interpretation, is the notion that utterances do not take place in isolation. In the introduction to her book *Reading Dialogics*, Lynn Pearce uses the metaphor

⁵³ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 170.

⁵⁴ Roland Barthes, ‘From Work to Text’, in *Image Music Text*, Ed. and Trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 155-64 (p. 160).

⁵⁵ Thaïs E. Morgan, ‘Is There an Intertext in This Text?: Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality,’ *American Journal of Semiotics*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1985), 1- 40 (p. 2).

of a telephone conversation to articulate the concept.⁵⁶ The point of that analogy is that such a conversation can only function as a means of communication between two people: someone has to answer the phone in order for communication to take place. Dialogism predicates, therefore, the essential role of an addressee, a reader.⁵⁷ Pearce points out the awkwardness most of us feel with an answering machine, that we do not feel that a phone-call has ‘got through’ when it ends with leaving a message.⁵⁸ However, when we are in a room with a person who is talking on the phone, it is often possible to reconstruct both sides of the conversation, using clues provided by our shared conventions of conversation or from knowledge of the speaker.

A polyphonic novel is characterized by a ‘carnivalistic’ stance which parodies and dethrones dominant ideologies or institutions. Most critics see in this notion of ‘carnivalization’ a theory of intertextuality. In the aspects of parody and the dismissal of dominant ideologies (or metanarratives) it is possible to see the connection between the concept of carnival and some of the foundational aspects of postmodernism: a suspicion of ‘grand narratives’, a blurring of distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art and between original and replica. John Stephens describes the concept of carnival as expressed in children’s literature as ‘grounded in a playfulness which situates itself in positions of nonconformity’.⁵⁹ Carnival, he suggests, represents a form of antiauthoritarianism, expressed in parody and in references to food and ‘naughty’ bodily functions; food, he suggests, especially in British children’s books, is ritualistic. Children express carnival through picnics, food fights, midnight feasts, and bonfires.⁶⁰ We will see this spirit of carnival, especially anti-authoritarianism, reflected throughout Jones’s work.

⁵⁶ Lynne Pearce, *Reading Dialogics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Pearce, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Pearce, p. 3.

⁵⁹ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (Harlow, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1992), p. 121.

⁶⁰ Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, pp. 122-23.

Julia Kristeva develops Bakhtin's ideas further: intertextual relations are created at the 'intersection of textual surfaces' rather than a 'point' (a fixed meaning): 'as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context'. A text is thus constructed from a 'mosaic of quotations,' and the notion of intertextuality replaces that of 'intersubjectivity'.⁶¹ Kristeva introduces to Bakhtin's theories the concept of transformation and displacement. Any text, she argues, is 'the absorption and transformation of another'.⁶² Neither Kristeva nor Bakhtin, however, says much about the reader. In one of her critical essays, Jones describes a more complex relationship; to her, the reading experience consists of a three-way relationship between the thoughts of the author, the character(s), and the reader, and she writes that it is up to her to combine any of these with the action in the story in all kinds of interesting ways.⁶³

Roland Barthes, who developed Kristeva's ideas and whose formulation of intertextuality is probably more widely known than hers, makes a distinction between 'readerly' texts, monologic works, where a single point of view and/or ideology is imposed on the reader, and 'writerly' ones, where the reader actively participates in what he calls the 'circular memory of reading'. He writes:

To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names, [...] so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation of a metonymic labor [...] reading does not consist in stopping the chain of systems, in establishing a truth, a legality of the text, and consequently in leading its reader into "errors"; it consists in coupling these systems, not

⁶¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel,' *The Kristeva Reader*, Ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 34-61 (p. 37).

⁶² Kristeva, p. 37.

⁶³ Jones, 'Creating the Experience', p. 51.

according to their finite quantity, but according to their plurality'.⁶⁴

Jones is without question a 'writerly' writer, and I will expand on this concept in a later chapter.

Both Kristeva and Barthes, then, were in one way or another developing Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, but, for the purposes of this thesis, at least as interesting is another of Bakhtin's concepts: the chronotope. The chronotope, according to Bakhtin, is the time and place where narrative exists, and contains within it certain dialogic or intertextual landmarks. There may be chronotopes specific to a particular genre, with particular landmarks or identifying features that connect them to that genre. For example, we may find a chronotope of the journey, or a chronotope of 'meeting'. For Bakhtin, the chronotope is the place where 'Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'. He speaks of the chronotope as the place 'where the knots of narrative are tied and untied'. To them belongs 'the meaning that shapes narrative'.⁶⁵ There may be a number of different chronotopes specific to a given work or author: 'Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships'. The relationships between chronotopes are dialogical, and this dialogue 'enters the world of the author, of the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers. And all these worlds are chronotopic as well'.⁶⁶

Bakhtin writes of the relationship between the real and the represented worlds: 'the work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation'. Most strikingly, he refers to a *creative* chronotope inside which this

⁶⁴ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 11.

⁶⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas, 1981), p. 250.

⁶⁶ Bakhtin, p. 252.

exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the ‘distinctive life of the work’.⁶⁷ I suggest that it is in this creative chronotope that the intertextual relationship may be found. The specific literary allusion planted by the author becomes a point of reference for the reader that points her to this intertextual space between and behind the text where meaning exists.

To illustrate the way these chronotopes and points of allusion might work, let us look at an example from Jones’s *Hexwood*. At intervals throughout the story, we are given glimpses of a medieval castle with knights on horseback emerging from it. Bakhtin might identify the setting as a Quest chronotope, or a Romance chronotope. The castle itself and the knights on horseback are familiar landmarks that invite certain genre expectations. Now, suppose one of the knights is dressed all in green, as is the case in *Hexwood*. Another knight in the story carries a shield marked with a red cross. Such details create points of allusion that may or may not cause the reader to think of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, or the Red Cross knight who goes pricking across the plain in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*.

Such points of allusion could be equated conceptually with a hypertext link in an online document. The link is there; clicking on it will direct the reader to more information that will illuminate or complicate the original text. Harold Bloom, another important critic of intertextuality, suggests the term ‘tessera’ for such points of allusion. This means a token of recognition, ‘a fragment of a pot, which with the other fragments would re-constitute the vessel’.⁶⁸ Interestingly, Gili Bar-Hillel’s analogy of the ‘trencadis’ – a mosaic technique – echoes Bloom’s in her discussion of *Howl’s Moving Castle*, where she identifies *The Wizard of Oz* as an intertext.⁶⁹

Bloom’s study of intertextuality is usually regarded more as a study of

⁶⁷ Bakhtin, p. 254.

⁶⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1973), p.67.

⁶⁹ Gili Bar-Hillel, ‘Of Moving Castles and Flying Houses: *The Wizard of Oz* and *Howl’s Moving Castle* as Interconnected Milestones in Children’s Fantasy Literature’, in *Crossing Textual Boundaries in International Children’s Literature*, Ed. Lance Weldy (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 382-397 (p. 382).

influence, although he describes his work as ‘the story of intra-poetic relationships’.⁷⁰ Harold Bloom’s theories are derived from notions of the sublime as proposed by Longinus and Kant; they are tied up with the concept of struggle and domination. He reads the ‘life-cycle’ of the poet as ‘akin to what Freud called the family romance’, in which, in an Oedipal relationship, the younger poet (the ephebe) is forced to confront and ‘kill’ the precursor’.⁷¹ His view is pessimistic and reflects a somewhat modernist vision of decay and decadence, ennui and exhaustion. His reading of the poetic struggle is all about change, discontinuity, displacement and ‘misreading’, whereas in the works of authors like Diana Wynne Jones I see a process that is more about absorption, or of the nourishment received from the past, rather than a battle with a precursor. In this instance, Jones’s use of intertextuality can be seen to be aligned more with Kristeva or Barthes than with Bloom.

Bloom’s notion of struggle arises naturally out of the question of influence, and one of the central theoretical debates in this area concerns the relationship of influence and intertextuality. Influence is aligned with the notion of the autonomous subject, the author as prime creator of his or her work, a vision of the author that has become unpopular lately. On the other hand, some theorists of intertextuality move further and further away from the idea of an originary author – Barthes’ famous phrase ‘the death of the author’ pretty much sums up that view – and, as mentioned, neither Kristeva nor Bakhtin have much to say about a reader, though they do refer to an addressor and addressee *within the text*. It should be possible both to support a notion of agency and to introduce the figure of a reader whose role becomes central in the creation of meaning.

Structuralist Gerard Genette uses the term ‘transtextuality’ to discuss a broad category of works that refer to another in some way. His encyclopedic discussion includes the term ‘paratext’ - the title, subtitles or material external to the text. For example, he cites the original chapter headings in *Ulysses*, which add a

⁷⁰Bloom, p. 5.

⁷¹Bloom, p. 8.

framework to the text.⁷² We might include here the chapter headings and epigrammatical material in *Fire and Hemlock*, which quote the ballads ‘Thomas the Rhymer’ and ‘Tam Lin’. As well, the novel is divided into four sections, plus a ‘Coda’, each given musical notation, such as ‘*allegro vivace*’; these enforce the musical structure of a quartet, reminding us of the connection Jones herself has drawn with Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.

Perhaps most useful in a discussion of intertextuality is Genette’s term ‘hypertextuality’, which he uses for any relationship between a text one is reading (hypertext) to an earlier one (hypotext). For example, he suggests that *The Aeneid* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* are both hypertexts of the same hypotext: *The Odyssey*.⁷³ He argues that the transformation of *The Odyssey* to *Ulysses* is ‘simple’ or ‘direct’: Joyce transposes the action of *The Odyssey* to twentieth century Dublin. ‘Joyce’, he writes, ‘tells the story of Ulysses in a manner other than Homer’s, and Vergil tell the story of Aeneas in the manner of Homer’.⁷⁴ He admits that it is possible to trace echoes of other works in just about any work: ‘The effect of such an attitude would be to subsume the whole of universal literature under the field of hypertextuality, which would make the study of it somewhat unmanageable’. Above all, he declares, ‘this attitude would invest the hermeneutic activity of the reader with an authority and a significance I cannot sanction’.⁷⁵ Genette may not be able to sanction it, but I believe that discussion of intertextuality without some discussion of the hermeneutic activity of the reader becomes a somewhat mechanical process.

Linda Hutcheon acknowledges that although it is no longer possible to speak comfortably of authors (and sources and influences), ‘we still need a critical language in which to discuss those ironic allusions, those re-contextualized quotations, those double-edged parodies both of genre and of specific works that

⁷² Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 3.

⁷³ Genette, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Genette, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Genette, p. 9.

proliferate in both modernist and postmodernist texts'.⁷⁶ Intertextuality, she argues, situates the locus of meaning in the relationship between reader and text, and within the history of discourse. Such a locus of meaning may be equated with Bakhtin's 'creative chronotope': once a relationship has been established between texts, through the device of a deliberate allusion to a previous text, the present text is opened up and boundaries between texts are broken down.

Catherine Butler makes the important point that questions of influence are often raised in a way that diminishes the perceived quality of a given author's work – that having one's work compared to one or the other may not in fact be an advantage, because it can lead to accusations of being derivative or even in extreme cases of plagiarism. (It's worth noting parenthetically that such an argument is often leveraged against J.K. Rowling). Butler records that Jones admits to having been enormously influenced by both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, though notes that it can be difficult to ascertain exactly where that influence lies.⁷⁷ It is important to note, as Butler does, 'the *general* influence of Tolkien and Lewis on the subsequent development of the genre [of fantasy], for later fantasy has come to some extent to be defined in terms of the conventions that they established or popularized', the most tenacious of which is 'their ubiquitous medievalism' along with the 'moral dualism and apocalyptic nature' of the works.⁷⁸ Butler argues convincingly that in regard to the latter Lewis and Tolkien are bound to have been affected by their respective experiences in World War I.

One of the central 'problems' with the notion of influence in our present theoretical climate is the unavoidable association with privilege and power and what seems to be a natural consequence: struggle. In Bloomian/Kantian/Burkean terms, just as the subject must overcome with his natural rational superiority the terror and passion created by the object of the sublime, so must the new artist struggle to overcome the power of 'strong poets', such as Milton, from

⁷⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 126.

⁷⁷ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p. 18.

⁷⁸ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, pp. 19-20.

the past. The intertextual view I propose suggests a more cooperative approach is possible. Texts create a discursive world that itself becomes a source for the artist. As Hutcheon suggests, postmodernism situates itself in a ‘world’ of texts and intertexts – a world not of ‘everyday reality’ but of discourse.⁷⁹ Margarete Landwehr cites art historian Michael Baxandall, who enriches the notion of influence and implicitly supports the issue of agency when he writes:

If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than Y did something to X [...]. If we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, [...] copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody.⁸⁰

I also hope to demonstrate that in Jones’s use of intertextuality, the author is giving power to the reader. Many of Jones’s works have thematic concerns with the use and misuse of power and promote a sense that an ability to think for oneself enables one to escape control; this is extended to the reader as well as to characters. The reader may be confronted with difficulty or confusion, but by coming to understand the range of allusions is provided the tools with which to negotiate the text.

The historicist approach – that one text precedes and influences another – faces the ongoing problem that it is necessary to *prove* influence. The theory of intertextuality allows for unwitting association as well as deliberate reference. When it can be shown that a word or phrase is a deliberate allusion to another work, the association is unavoidable, but of course the level of understanding or

⁷⁹ Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 125.

⁸⁰ Qtd Margarete Landwehr, ‘Introduction: Literature and the Visual Arts: Questions of Influence and Intertextuality’, *College Literature* 29:3 (Summer 2002), 1-16 (p. 5).

meaning depends on a shared discourse between author and reader, and sometimes the reader may bring a greater depth or significance to the material than was originally ‘intended’ by the author. Sometimes the intertextuality may be created inadvertently, or without the author actually having read the source material. This can arise from, for example, reference to shared cultural landmarks. One may make allusions to the television series *The Simpsons* as an example of a postmodern artefact without ever having seen an actual episode, simply because its characters and its satirical role are familiar within the context of contemporary popular culture. It is still possible to make Biblical references that belong to a shared cultural vocabulary – Noah’s flood, the Christmas story, Jonah and the whale – though today such references are less and less ‘active’ because fewer and fewer people are familiar with them. Sometimes, the ‘originary trace’, to use Derrida’s expression, cannot be accurately determined. For example, John Stephens, discussing a line in Peter Dickinson’s *Merlin Dreams*, traces it to a climactic scene in Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*;⁸¹ I have always read echoes in that same Tolkien scene of the ending of Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*. It is likely that Dickinson would have read either, or both – it is impossible to determine – but either or both intertextual echoes add a greater complexity to the experience of reading the Dickinson text. It is possible, in a case like this, to have a ‘circular memory of reading’ that may include your own reading with or without being sure of the author’s intention.

Conversely, another important aspect of intertextuality is parody, which Linda Hutcheon defines as a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity. She makes the interesting observation that repetition is conservative but that difference is revolutionary,⁸² but notes that in parody we must acknowledge authorial intention. The intent of parody is to parody a certain text; thus, we are forced, she argues, to acknowledge at least an

⁸¹ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, p. 115.

⁸² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 2000), p. xii.

inference of intention and to theorize that inference.⁸³

Hutcheon uses the term ‘parody’ quite broadly; for example, she applies it to T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Italo Calvino’s *If On a Winter’s Night A Traveller*, and John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. She argues that parody is not just the ‘ridiculing imitation’ mentioned in dictionary definitions, adding ‘Ironic “transcontextualization” is what distinguishes parody from pastiche or imitation’.⁸⁴ Conventions, as well as specific works, can be parodied; certainly, this is what we see in Jones’s *Tough Guide to Fantasy Land*, for example. Hutcheon suggests that parody can be serious criticism or ‘genial mockery of codifiable forms’ and ranges from respectful admiration to biting ridicule. However, she argues that parody should not be confused with satire, which is ‘moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention’.⁸⁵

Where she makes a distinction between intertextuality in a broad sense and parody, Hutcheon’s definition of intertextuality seems to be mostly in line with the very open-ended Kristevan use of it: ‘It is not,’ Hutcheon states, ‘just a matter of the text’s somehow parthenogenetic or magical absorption and transformation of other texts. Texts do not generate anything until they are perceived and interpreted’.⁸⁶ Further, she suggests ‘as readers or viewers or listeners who decode parodic structures, we also act as decoders of encoded intent’.⁸⁶ At one end of the spectrum, Hutcheon seems to suggest, is the somewhat formless notion of intertextuality in which everything is ‘already written’; at the other is parody, where the relationship between the source work and the parody is clearly defined and the reader is fully engaged in both identifying and decoding the parody. I recognize the distinction Hutcheon is making in regards to parody, but feel that aspects of intertextuality can also be found in various points along that same spectrum. Parody may indeed require a recognition of that which it is parodying; intertextuality in a broader sense does not, necessarily. In other words, recognizing or identifying the

⁸³ Hutcheon, *Parody*, p. xiv.

⁸⁴ Hutcheon, *Parody*, p. 12.

⁸⁵ Hutcheon, *Parody*, p. 16.

⁸⁶ Hutcheon, *Parody*, p. 23.

intertextual allusion is not a necessary *condition* of understanding or interpreting the story at some level.

All this becomes still more complicated when examining intertextuality in the context of children's books. Christine Wilkie highlights the special considerations needed when developing a theory of intertextuality for children because of questions of presupposition. She makes the interesting point that coming to the text with pre-knowledge may restrict the opportunity for 'free intertextual interplay'.⁸⁷ She believes that literature for children has to tread a careful path between a need to be over-referential so as not to lose readers, and the need to leave enough 'intertextual space so as not to deny readers free intertextual interplay'.⁸⁸

This question, of course, intersects with broader ongoing critical discussions of the 'child as reader', which have tended to be in a response to or a reaction against the positions established by Aidan Chambers (1978) and Jaqueline Rose (1984) respectively. Theorizing authorial intention, as becomes hard to avoid in arguing for a certain text being a parody of another text or containing meaningful allusions, is only a step away from Chambers' proposed method to help a book to 'discover the reader it seeks'.⁸⁹ John Stephens argues, and I tend to agree with him, that the implied reader is best constructed as a compromise between the 'ideal' – his term 'reified' – reader that is required by a more structuralist reading, and the other extreme 'by which readers transform elements of texts into figures for their unconscious fantasies'.⁹⁰ He also makes the important point that distancing strategies, like intertextual references and metafictional devices, 'encourage the

⁸⁷ Christine Wilkie, 'Relating Texts: Intertextuality,' in *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, Ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.130-135 (p. 134).

⁸⁸ Wilkie, p 135.

⁸⁹ Aidan Chambers, 'The Reader in the Book: Notes from Work in Progress', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 1978, 1-19 (p. 1).

⁹⁰ Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, p. 59.

constitution of a reading self in relation to the other constituted in and by the text'.⁹¹ David Rudd argues for a Bakhtinian, dialogic approach to the question that allows for a 'possible' reader rather than the singular 'ideal' reader; he also makes the important point that there are competing discourses at work in any text'.⁹² All these theories of readership of course inform more specific considerations of intertextuality in texts for children as well.

According to one critic, Mary-Anne Shonoda, Susan Stewart's *Nonsense* may be the earliest work that theorizes intertextuality in the context of children's literature, though the work is more concerned with children's nonsense rhymes and games than children's literature generally.⁹³ Stewart does not actually define intertextuality, but seems to use it to describe interpretation, and the discourse between what she calls the worlds of common sense and nonsense respectively. She writes:

While the common sense of our intertextual construct arranges the language of realism in a metonymic, contiguous, relation to the language of everyday life, this metonymy becomes increasingly traversed as myth, science fiction, and fantasy shift its context and irony splits it into two levels. Metafiction continues the splitting with a reflexive gesture that threatens infinity. At the point of nonsense, common sense is scattered and dispersed, made relative to alternative systems of order.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, p. 69.

⁹² David Rudd, 'Children's Literature and the Return to Rose', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 35:3 (Fall 2010), 290-310 (p. 299).

⁹³ Mary-Anne Shonoda, 'Metaphor and Intertextuality: A Cognitive Approach to Intertextual Meaning-Making in Metafictional Fantasy Novels,' *International Research in Children's Literature*, 5:1 (2012), 81-96 (p. 14 n. 2).

⁹⁴ Susan Stewart, *Nonsense. Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 21.

She argues for a fluid transference across the worlds of fiction and play that again echoes Barthes' 'circular movement'. Humour and play, she suggests, arise from 'intertextual contradictions'.⁹⁵ Nonsense overlaps two or more disparate domains:

nonsense can be seen as an activity that replicates the activity of both play and metaphor. In everyday life and the fictions of realism a phrase like "the sun rose and set on her" makes perfect sense, but what if that became literally true? The person would get very hot. [...] Once the impossible context is reached, the interpretive possibilities open up and nonsense, like metaphor, is characterized by a multiplicity of meanings'.⁹⁶

Texts that carry extra interpretive rules based on their extra level of abstraction can be termed 'ludic' texts.⁹⁷ The interpretive possibilities of nonsense and play constitute important aspects of Jones's technique, as we shall see.

Several critics discuss intertextuality in its manifestation as 'retelling'. In *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (2014), Brian Attebery investigates the way that writers reframe myth. He argues that rather than 'simply identifying a particular Celtic myth in a work of modern fantasy, we should look at how the fantasist appropriates from, engages with, travesties, and reconstitutes the myth'.⁹⁸ John Stephens notes that a retelling might be playing off against 'some common notion of the shape and content of an "original" text, and might hence assume that the audience will be in a position to weigh one against the other', and that 'because of the coexistence within the one discourse space of pre-text and focused text the significance of the story will tend to be situated not in the focused text but in the process of interaction between the texts'.⁹⁹ However, elsewhere he

⁹⁵ Stewart, p. 37.

⁹⁶ Stewart, pp. 35-36.

⁹⁷ Stewart, p. 39.

⁹⁸ Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories. Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 3.

⁹⁹ Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, p. 88.

and Robyn McCallum describe an experience whereby in a classroom only a small minority of readers understood the allusions to Norse myth in Jones's *Eight Days of Luke*, and 'for the rest it remained largely meaningless when explained'.¹⁰⁰ I would argue that Jones's model is not about explanation, or passive acceptance of knowledge, but about discovery or recognition; this is supported by a post from a reader on the *Facebook* group 'The Diana Wynne Jones Appreciation Society': she writes (of *Eight Days of Luke*), 'Loved it, then found out who it was about and then loved it x 100 and cue a childhood obsessing over Norse mythology and a voyage of discovery with DWJ'.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Jones commented 'I wrote *Eight Days of Luke* very early on, using the days of the week, which have the names of the deities hidden in them and yet presented to us on a daily basis, to try to express how the ancient and chthonic things are in fact nearly always present to everyone'.¹⁰² The familiarity of the days of the week is offered as a bridge to the more fantastic elements in the text.

A reader needs to discover something for herself in order to activate the full pleasure of an intertextual reading. It may be enough simply to invite curiosity: for example, while researching the allusions in *Hexwood*, I noticed what seemed to be a very pointed reference to the character Hume having an eye infection as a child. Near the end of the book, Hume is revealed to be Merlin, and another character mentions that the last time they saw each other the Merlin character had lost an eye. Despite much searching, I was unable to track down any legend in which Merlin lost an eye. Colleagues suggested that the missing eye might be a reference to Odin; I was not convinced until sometime later I discovered that there is a British tradition beginning with the Venerable Bede where the mythic figure Wodan, often conflated with Odin, is named as an ancestor of the line of British

¹⁰⁰ John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (London: Garland, 1998), p. 68.

¹⁰¹ 'The Diana Wynne Jones Appreciation Society', *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2205012597/>

¹⁰² Diana Wynne Jones, 'Answers to Some Questions,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp.115-33, p. 126.

kings.¹⁰³ Given a thematic connection in the novel with the notion of lineage and the ‘right’ person being given power, this, for me, was a significant ‘Aha’ moment, where all the clues and references fell into place. It is also one example of many where there may be more than one intertextual association for a given character in Jones’s work.

Although Stephens and McCallum seem somewhat dismissive of Jones’s use of Norse mythology in *Eight Days of Luke*, in an earlier study Stephens argued that intertextuality can influence a future reading and is of itself achronological; this is an essential point to remember in discussing Jones’s techniques.¹⁰⁴ Farah Mendlesohn points out ‘Jones’s use of intertextuality assumes that there is no specific age at which a text cannot be accessed at some level or another’.¹⁰⁵ She argues that Jones’s works are aimed at readers who will themselves reread and remix, coming to them differently with each rereading. Indeed, Mendlesohn makes the insightful assertions that Jones is setting out to grow the readers she wishes to have,¹⁰⁶ and that her readers will inhabit a ‘book-shaped’ world which is a creative place.¹⁰⁷

Robin McCallum is one critic who applies a Bakhtinian perspective to children’s literature. She believes that mainstream children’s and adolescent fiction is dominated by Romantic, humanist views, which she terms ‘premodern’, and is interested in novels that use overtly dialogic narrative strategies, with special reference to ‘polyphonic, multistranded, intertextual and mixed genre narrative

¹⁰³ Richard Fahey, ‘Woden and Odinn: Mythic Figures of the North’, *Medieval Studies Research Blog*, University of Notre Dame, available <https://sites.nd.edu/manuscript-studies/2015/03/26/woden-and-odinn-mythic-figures-of-the-north/>

¹⁰⁴ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁵ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁶ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁷ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 195.

forms and historical genres'.¹⁰⁸ In her view, dialogism implies that reading is an interactive process: 'meanings are the product of intertextual and intersubjective relations generated by a text'.¹⁰⁹ She maintains that intertextuality is an 'implicitly polyphonic narrative strategy because it enables the representation of multiple simultaneous intersecting voices and discourses with a text'.¹¹⁰ Although noting that Bakhtin's concept of 'addressivity' is in some ways similar to reception theory and Iser's concept of the implied reader, McCallum argues that Iser's theories imply that a reader must align with the 'implied reader' position in order to get a correct reading (as Chambers maintained), but that Bakhtin's position 'allows a reader to refuse a constructed subject position and that texts can construct a range of implied subject positions'.¹¹¹ She believes that a substantial portion of children's literature attempts to impose a unified (monologic) worldview on readers.¹¹²

McCallum cites Maria Nikolajeva (*Children's Literature Comes of Age*) as one of the few other critics to incorporate theories of polyphony in her work, but notes that Nikolajeva sees polyphony as a comparatively recent phenomenon, and identifies it with postmodernism, whereas McCallum believes that all children's novels are essentially polyphonic, but distinguishes between implicit and explicit polyphonic tendencies.¹¹³ Overall, McCallum's ideas have important application for this study, particularly in reference to the explicit polyphonic tendencies in Jones's work and the ongoing discussion of the 'implied reader' in children's literature. McCallum contends, and I would agree, that Bakhtin's theories allow a fluid view of the reader/subject position:

The theory of reading which might be extrapolated from Bakhtin's work

¹⁰⁸ Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction, The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (London: Garland, 1999), p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ McCallum, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ McCallum, p. 15.

¹¹¹ McCallum, p. 16.

¹¹² McCallum, p. 17.

¹¹³ McCallum, pp. 24-25.

contends that readers employ a range of strategies for reading and response, and that the novel – by virtue of its inherent capacity to incorporate a diversity of narrative techniques and voices, and a diversity of social and ideological discourses – can potentially construct a multiplicity of implied reader positions. Thus, implied readers are conceived of as actively involved in the production of meaning.¹¹⁴

She also argues that texts that make use of dialogic narrative structures and techniques construct more active reading positions and makes the important point that these techniques equip readers with critical strategies that can ‘facilitate a question of conventional notions of selfhood, meaning and history’.¹¹⁵

Another critic, Mary-Anne Shonoda, uses cognitive theory – an area of study that is growing in popularity, especially in the side of children’s literature studies that is more interested in child-development – to discuss the metaphoric reading of what she calls ‘foregrounded intertextuality’. Like McCallum, she argues that such reading encourages ‘non-linear reading practices and although it cannot guarantee certainty of a character’s mental processes, it enables us to infer possible chains of thought and “get inside” the character’s mind. More importantly, [...] everyday knowledge schemas can become altered by our reading experiences and in turn influence how we perceive the world’.¹¹⁶ She argues that there is an interpretive playfulness to intertextuality that derives from the way overt intertexts require readers to fill the relationship gap between primary-text and intertext and that the ensuing textual response is consequently more idiosyncratic than that of single story-world texts.¹¹⁷ She suggests that in terms of ‘reader agency, then, intertextual interpretation is on a par with that of metaphoric expression: it enables

¹¹⁴ McCallum, p. 259.

¹¹⁵ McCallum, p. 259.

¹¹⁶ Mary-Anne Shonoda, ‘Metaphor and Intertextuality: A Cognitive Approach to Intertextual Meaning-Making in Metafictional Fantasy Novels,’ *International Research in Children’s Literature*, 5:1 (2012), 81-96 (p. 90).

¹¹⁷ Shonoda, p. 84.

readers to determine the degree to which the world of the intertext influences the world of the primary text and forces readers to acknowledge the less fixed status of meanings produced in this way'.¹¹⁸ As far as the notion of reader agency goes, I concur with her argument; although Diana Wynne Jones is not one of the authors she discusses, I will attempt to show that Jones's use of intertextuality encourages the same freedom for the reader. Where I diverge from Shonoda's findings is that she argues that the relationship between texts occurs in the same story-world, so that an intertextual connection can be activated or verified if readers know that the viewpoint character is familiar with the work alluded to. My own feeling is that the worlds overlap, in a kind of Venn diagram, or that the intersection takes place in the mind of the reader not simply in that of a character. For example, a ten-year-old Polly in *Fire and Hemlock* would not have read T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, alluded to in the scene where she first meets Thomas Lynn. Again, I believe that the relationship between texts is more metonymic than metaphoric. If one maps the story worlds, it is in their intersection that interpretive transference occurs, but there are interpretive spaces in each of the texts that are free from each other. There may also be overlaps with other spaces, and it may not always be clear which is the 'originary' space.

Simple one-to-one relationships in Diana Wynne Jones's use of intertextuality are scarce. Her use of allusions is as broad as the rainbow analogy I cited her using earlier in this chapter; as one of her characters declares, in what could be a touchstone for this thesis: 'the truth has no particular shape'.¹¹⁹ Her approach to intertextual allusions is on the one hand subversive, demonstrating that stories are not 'fixed' and that readers can be free to imagine alternate outcomes, or that 'rules' of genre traditions are meant to be broken. On the other hand, the conceptual space of the intertext, where the stories overlap, can be shown to be a powerful metaphor for enchantment, offering the possibility of alternate realities just around the corner from our own.

¹¹⁸ Shonoda, p. 88.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *Dogsbody*, p.185.

My next two chapters will focus on Jones's subversive tendencies. Chapter Two will investigate allusions and the way that Jones's use of them is multiple, often deliberately ambiguous. Many, if not most, of her allusions are used subversively, allowing the opportunity to revise or rehabilitate an ending, such as providing a happy outcome for the story of Romeo and Juliet. After discussing several such examples, I will use as a focus text *Hexwood*, a novel rich in allusions but where nothing is quite what a reader would assume or expect.

Chapter Three will demonstrate that although metafictional techniques such as intertextual allusions may seem to be a barrier in 'difficult' texts, they can empower readers and help them learn to question arbitrary 'rules', whether those be societal or the unwritten rules of genre expectations. The use and abuse of power is an important theme in Jones's work, and this chapter will examine, among other things, the ways that parody can be used to reveal and thence undermine power structures. Two novels, *The Power of Three* and *The Magicians of Caprona*, illustrate the way that Jones subverts reader expectations of genre at the same time as characters learn to recognize that they don't necessarily have to conform to family 'rules'. Through the dialogic relationship between *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* and her related duology, *Dark Lord of Derkholm* and *The Year of the Dragon*, Jones uses parody to highlight and undermine the 'rules' of the fantasy genre and to show both characters and readers that power structures can be undercut. Jones deconstructs gender 'rules' in *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg*, where both characters and readers learn that 'people are more than just a set of rules'.¹²⁰ Finally, I will show that although Jones may herself use the power of language and subtle coercive techniques, she also gives readers the tools to recognize and resist them.

As my first two chapters show, Jones stresses the need for both characters and readers to be open to alternate possibilities, whether of identity or of modes of behaviour. The succeeding chapters in this thesis will all investigate the kind of double vision that is necessary to help the creative imagination to flourish and the

¹²⁰ Diana Wynne Jones, *Black Maria* (London: Methuen, 1991)

potential stagnation that can result if characters – and readers – are not open to different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. In Chapter Four, I will focus on Jones’s use of wordplay, defamiliarization, and point of view, and how she makes the literal metaphorical and the metaphorical literal in her work. Word play functions to create a mimesis of the act of interpretation, and a flexible imagination is essential both for the characters in the texts and for readers. Indeed, Jones’s novels exemplify what Roland Barthes called ‘writerly’ texts. After looking briefly at several works, including *Howl’s Moving Castle*, the chapter will focus on the novella ‘The True State of Affairs’, which demonstrates the potential for tragedy in a failure of the imagination.

Intertextual references, then, can be both an analogue for the use of the imagination and a way to develop individual imaginative power through the reading experience. Jones represents virtual spaces in her work in which the creative experience can flourish; the three I will discuss in Chapter Five – the multiverse, the ‘mythosphere’ and the heterotopia – can be seen to overlap conceptually with intertextuality. Jones’s representation of the multiverse echoes the openness and allusive qualities we saw in her use of intertextual references, and also their limitless possibility. The ‘mythosphere’ featured in the novella *The Game* is shown to equate with the ‘creative chronotope’, which Bakhtin describes as the space where the reader meets the text. In Foucault’s conception, heterotopias are particular spaces that exist in the real world but outside of conventional experience and which can provide a portal or gateway to a more fantastic space. I argue that the Babylon Hotel, and the fantasy convention that takes place there in *Deep Secret*, functions as a heterotopic space, as does Banners Wood in the novel *Hexwood*. They are both heterotopias for the characters in the text, and the texts themselves, especially *Hexwood*, become heterotopias for readers.

Continuing the discussion of the importance of spaces in Jones’s work, Chapter Six will look specifically at Jones’s use of myth and sacred spaces to represent what she calls ‘the awesome’, or the numinous. An important image for her was a garden she experienced as a child, which she describes as having been for her a way of understanding the world of the imagination and the way it can be accessed through such spaces. There are many representations of gardens in

Jones's work, which are seen as foci of power, as well as recognizable places of power such as Stonehenge or Glastonbury. I will then shift the discussion from 'our' world to Dalemark; the Dalemark quartet uses its own system of internal dialogism and inter-novel intertextuality to explore the world of the imagination that runs parallel with and can be accessed from the mundane world through creativity.

Chapter Seven is a culmination of all the aspects of intertextuality that have been discussed thus far and focusses on what arguably are Jones's most important works: *Fire and Hemlock*, *Hexwood*, and *The Homeward Bounders*. All three works use intertextual references to enhance a theme of sacrifice: the self-sacrifice that Jones argues is necessary for true creativity and to remain free from tyranny. In *Fire and Hemlock*, Jones uses Eliot's *Four Quartets* and *The Waste Land* along with the myth of Cupid and Psyche as retold by C.S. Lewis to represent the power of selfless love. *Hexwood* depicts a main character whose role echoes that of both the Grail Knight and the Fisher King in restoring virtue and overthrowing tyranny. *The Homeward Bounders* depicts a true Promethean hero through the self-sacrifice of its main character.

Jones's use of intertextuality, then, is shown to be emblematic of the process of discovery and of the wonder that can be found in reading, enacted by characters who explore an enchanted world, fight against tyranny and are willing to sacrifice themselves. The underlying sense of enchantment and wonder, and the crucial importance of the creative imagination represented in a kind of Blakean double vision, align Jones with the Romantic, even as several of her characters can be seen to be Romantic heroes. Enchantment represents a form of transcendence, accessible to readers, that can be equated with the sublime, and the 'transport' of the 'intertextual turn' is the sublime encountered through text.

Chapter Two: ‘The truth has no particular shape’: Subversive Allusions

Introduction

At the end of her work on intertextuality, Mary Orr lists close to 1200 words that can be used to describe the ‘roles, functions, effects, and previous and more recent forms which “intertextuality” has embraced’.¹ It is no wonder, then, that the term is so imprecise, encompassing everything from direct quotation, through parody, to retelling, and thence to a kind of theoretical borderland, where every word or phrase will have some association with another, however random. My stated intention at the start of this thesis was to examine what intertextuality ‘does’ in a text; I think that for many readers, ‘intertextuality’ is most often understood as ‘allusion’. While all forms of intertextuality are allusions of one type or another, the way the allusions function can be identified with more specific forms such as parody or dialogism, as I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow. However, in this chapter I will focus on works that are the most immediately recognizable as being ‘allusive’ or as having identifiable intertextual underpinnings.

There are very few simple one-to-one allusions in Jones’s work, or ‘straight’ retellings that do not in some way subvert the original, and even fewer ‘throw-aways’, or the kind of ‘in-jokes’ that often alienate readers rather than drawing them in. Such references are fine if you get the joke, but if they have to be explained, the act of explanation, as Farah Mendlesohn has suggested, ‘kills’ them.² The only one of these in Jones’s work that comes immediately to mind is in *Dark Lord of Derkholm*, where a Dwarf (male) is called Galadriel. Derk (the titular lord

¹ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 238.

² Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. xxv.

of Derkholm) wonders what his parents were thinking.³ What this chapter will show is that attempts to identify one-on-one equivalencies in Jones's work, although nearly always productive, are often inadequate or even misleading. Allusion hunting is a hermeneutic exercise that resists a simple answer; indeed, the multiplicity of the answers becomes a feature of Jones's narrative strategies. In most of her work, and all of her best work, her uses of allusions are dialogic and flexible, sometimes contradictory, and always leaving the possibility of more than one way of looking at things. The references shift and build on each-other, each way of 'reading' the text creating a new pattern. Trying to 'fix' one reading of Jones's texts can be rather like gluing the pieces of a kaleidoscope onto a pane of glass: you get one nice pattern but have lost the opportunity to see others. When there is a clear identification of an intertext, for example the connection between *The Magicians of Caprona* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, our interpretation of that text certainly doesn't stop there. Jones demonstrates repeatedly that story is not destiny; because words or stories have been told before, that does not mean that the outcomes are fixed. Indeed, her open-endedness provides a kind of freedom for the reader to create different possible outcomes in the same way as we see enacted by characters in her texts.

In this chapter, I will look briefly first at three novels where there is a single clear intertextual underpinning and demonstrate that in each case Jones takes the opportunity of the retelling to 'rehabilitate' the outcome. Next, I will look at Jones's use of mythological or folkloric references as a kind of 'cauldron of story', where her allusions are used metonymically or symbolically. Finally, I will examine Jones's two most intertextually rich novels — *Fire and Hemlock* and *Hexwood* — both of which could, if one were to ask which kind of intertextuality they represented, be described as 'all of the above', yet for both of which the identification of an intertextual underpinning is only the beginning of the reading adventure. I focus in more depth on *Hexwood*, a work that has been considerably less discussed by critics than *Fire and Hemlock*.

³ Diana Wynne Jones, *Dark Lord of Derkholm* (New York: Greenwillow, 1998), p. 222.

Retelling as Rehabilitation: *The Magicians of Caprona*, *Archer's Goon*, and *The Time of the Ghost*

A few of Jones's books do contain direct and recognizable allusions; in these cases, recognizing the allusions is one of the least interesting aspects of the reading experience. What can be more rewarding is witnessing the way that Jones either subverts the story or rehabilitates it. *The Magicians of Caprona*, for example, has the underlying 'set up' of *Romeo and Juliet*, with feuding families in an Italianate city. Jones takes the opportunity to send up the play: a description of parties of young men brawling in the street is reminiscent of its opening scene, but the fighting is done with spells. Rinaldo Montana caused a rain of cow pats, and people said afterwards that 'he must have misjudged his spell because "everyone knew" that all Rinaldo's spells were love charms'.⁴ As we shall see in a later chapter, the set up allows Jones to comment on the notion that what 'everyone knew' is not always reliable and that individuals need to come out from under the control of 'received' notions of truth and power in order to develop their own identities freely. It also allows a happy ending for the 'Romeo and Juliet' situation, where the lovers, one from each of the feuding families, are able to marry secretly and to remain married (and alive) once their secret is revealed.

Kyra Jucovy has noted that *Archer's Goon* is a riff on Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and that through this connection Jones explores a theme of power relationships that resist totalitarianism. The reader, along with the viewpoint character, learns that the town where he and his family live is controlled by a family of powerful off-world beings, each one having jurisdiction over some aspect of the city. So, for example, one of them 'farms' the arts, while another 'farms' crime; still another 'farms' the infrastructure. Some of them are more ruthless and exploitative than others; Jucovy argues that the more unpleasant characters, Archer, Shine, and Dillon, correspond to the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and notes that their

⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Magicians of Caprona* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 10.

behaviour echoes that espoused by those that exploit power: mind control, surveillance, and enforced worship.⁵ In this case, Jucovy argues, unusually for Jones, family relationships provide a bulwark against those who would abuse power. ‘Big Brother is watching you’ becomes positive through the relationship between Howard and his younger sister Awful, and even though we discover that Howard is himself one of the powerful beings — Venturus — we get the sense that the risk of Howard fully ‘becoming’ Venturus will be modified or lessened as a result of his relationship with his earth family rather than with his alien siblings.

It is much more common for family relationships in Jones’s work to be difficult, even abusive, such as those depicted in *The Time of the Ghost*, given an extra intertextual ‘punch’ when one learns that the family situation and institutional setting of the novel reflect Jones’s own childhood. Biography, or in this case autobiography, is of course a text that may be invoked in an intertextual reading without necessarily falling victim to the ‘autobiographical fallacy’. Although Jones tells stories about her childhood, they are, after all, stories; the autobiography is fictionalized, and Jones raises issues about the nature of memory and the power of storytelling within the novel itself. Farah Mendlesohn writes that the autobiographical content raises the question of its intended audience: ‘For a child, it is a horror story of parental neglect and an attempt at empowerment that goes badly wrong. Read by an adult, it is a rather penetrating consideration of childhood responses to adult ideology.’⁶ However, the story can be read without the underlying knowledge, as I myself did the first time. Without the background, it is an absorbing and suspenseful fantasy complete with the fairy-tale trope of wicked, neglectful parents. I don’t believe that a casual reader, without knowing the details of Jones’s childhood, would take the description of children living in a hut in the grounds of a house that is used as a school, having to scrounge for food, or wearing a rag-bag collection of ill-fitting clothes, as anything more horrific than the

⁵ Kyra Jucovy, ‘Little Sister is Watching You: *Archer’s Goon* and 1984,’ *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21:2 (2010), 271-289 (p.276).

⁶ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. xxiv.

experiences of Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, or, indeed, Harry Potter, in his cupboard under the stairs in the Dursley home. It is the discovery by the reader that the wicked, neglectful parents were modelled on Jones's own that turns that part of it into a horror story,⁷ where realism intrudes on the fantasy story.

Jones writes 'I very seldom put anything in my books which is directly about my childhood, and when I do, I always feel I have to tone it down for credibility'.⁸ Nevertheless, although there are four sisters instead of three, an alert reader can identify incidents in the novel from stories Jones has told about her childhood, and there are aspects of what we know about Jones's sisters in the way the characters are depicted in the novel. I believe it is also possible to read the relationship between the 'ghost' and her mother as a way for Jones to express a certain amount of wishful thinking about her own relationship with her mother. The novel centres on a girl, one of four sisters, who finds herself, at the beginning of the novel, disembodied, certain only that she has been in an accident. She doesn't know which of the sisters she is. When she enters the kitchen of the school where her parents work, her mother, sensing that someone has come into the room even though she can't see the 'ghost,' calls her by name: 'Sally', the only character the ghost encounters to recognize her and name her correctly. The 'ghost' doesn't know, nor do we as readers at this stage in the book, that it is in fact Sally who is the ghost. Can we read this as the maternal instinct that seems to have been decidedly lacking in Jones's own mother? The character, Cart, who is the closest analogue to Jones herself, tells her sister at one point that it is impossible to change the past: 'All you can do to the past is remember it wrong or interpret it differently'.⁹ However, Jones appears to be arguing that some change is possible through story-telling.

⁷ There is considerable horror in many other episodes of the novel, as I shall discuss later.

⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, 'A Whirlwind Tour of Australia,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), p.186.

⁹ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Time of the Ghost* (London: Beaver Books, 1984), p. 107

The ‘Cauldron of Story’: A Tale of Time City, The Game, and Dogsboddy

As mentioned, many intertextual underpinnings cannot be identified in some of Jones’s works as clearly as in the three described above. That is not to say that Jones’s work is not filled with references from mythology or folklore, particularly that of Britain. Catherine Butler, in *Four British Fantasists*, explores the ‘fiction-making’ possibilities of folklore and the folk tradition that is rooted there.¹⁰ Figures from mythology, particularly British and Norse mythology, appear in different guises throughout Jones’s work, sometimes identified clearly sometimes not. Using a term that itself echoes the notion of intertextuality, John Clute refers to characters such as Prester John, who appears in two of Jones’s novels, as ‘underlier’ figures; ‘underliers’ are defined as characters who can be found in the ‘cauldron of story’, borrowing a term used by J.R.R. Tolkien in ‘On Fairy Tales’.¹¹ In some ways similar to the concept of the ‘chronotope’ that I will discuss later in this thesis, the term refers to names, places, or landscapes that have associations with history, myth or legend and which are free to be used and adapted in fiction. For example, a cast of ‘underlier’ figures appears in *Enchanted Glass*, where the protagonists encounter Oberon, Puck, and various other British nature entities.

A more vivid representation of the ‘cauldron of story’ can be found in the ‘mythosphere’ at the centre of the novella *The Game*. In this work, as Gabriela Steinke points out, nearly every character is a mythological figure, and, indeed, Jones provides, unusually for her, a guide to the characters at the end of the book.¹² The main character, Hayley, is the daughter of Merope, one of the Pleiades, and

¹⁰ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children’s Fantasies Of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), p. 192.

¹¹ ‘Underliers’ in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, Ed. John Clute and John Grant (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), p. 973.

¹² Gabriela Steinke, ‘The Games People Play,’ *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21:2 (2010), 187-196 (p. 187).

Sisyphus, the character from Greek mythology famous for being forced to roll a stone up a hill for eternity. Her grandfathers are Atlas and Jupiter himself, presented here as an overbearing authoritarian figure of a type familiar to Jones's readers. The characters, in their human roles, echo their mythological traits, and there is fun to be had in spotting the references; for example, Hayley's Grandad, the one who is Atlas, has work that seems 'to involve keeping up with the whole world'.¹³ In mythology, Sisyphus is punished for being hubristic, boasting that he knows more than Jupiter. As Jones describes him: '[Hayley's father] laughed proudly back, proud of Hayley's mother, proud in himself. There was pride in the set of his curly black head'.¹⁴

More often, though, as I have emphasized, mythological figures cannot be identified as clearly as they can in *The Game*. This is true of the intertextual references in *A Tale of Time City*, of which there are many; some are mere 'underliers', but we also see Jones working with more sophisticated allusions. The story involves a girl from London during the Second World War who is being evacuated to avoid the bombing (as was Jones herself). She finds herself instead transported to a place that studies time, ruled over by a mysterious semi-legendary person named Faber John. The city is under threat from those who want to control different times and take power for themselves. Sharon R. Scapple has written that Jones 'reactivates' myth, through the personage of Faber John, whom she identifies with the Greek God Hephaistos.¹⁵ There are, certainly, many points of equivalence between Faber John and Hephaistos, but to stop at that identification would be to limit the possible play of intertextual associations. Another character, Dr. Wilander, echoes Wayland Smith, another 'smith' figure like Hephaistos (and of course 'Faber' means 'smith'), and Faber John himself turns out to have been magically split into three persons, one of which is Dr. Wilander. Another is a man

¹³ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Game* (London: Penguin, 2007), p.15.

¹⁴ Jones, *The Game*, p. 14.

¹⁵ Sharon R. Scapple, 'Transformation of Myth in A Tale of Time City,' in *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Ed. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 117-124 (p. 119).

dressed in green who is reminiscent of the buried figure whom Jones tells us represents the community's spirit of creativity in *Black Maria*. Faber John has marital issues and is asleep in a cave under the city, details that might also bring Merlin to mind. Faber John's Well is reminiscent of Joseph of Arimathea's well in Glastonbury – a site that can be identified as the setting of one episode of the book: the village where Vivian's Cousin Marty lives is clearly Glastonbury, as Catherine Butler has shown, although Jones carefully doesn't name it.¹⁶ The name Faber John also echoes that of Prester John, a character who is mentioned in *The Game* and who may provide an Asian or exotic connection in this work. In legend, Prester John is descended from the Magi and associated with either the Orient or Africa, where he is rumoured to be the guardian of untold wealth. Faber John is the custodian of several powerful caskets, which, united, form the basis of his power and keep the City stable.

The person of Faber John illustrates the technique typical of Jones's work, where the allusions are not simple but multiple and all the different possible identities can make 'sense' within the context of the novel. Another such figure is that of a wild huntsman, whom we see in a scene in *The Game*, and who figures prominently in one of Jones's early works, *Dogsbody*. Catherine Butler notes the 'unobtrusive complexity'¹⁷ of the way Jones uses this myth or indeed myths. The plot of *Dogsbody* centres on a conflict among star figures, resulting in Sirius being expelled from his heavenly body and reborn as a dog on Earth, where he must find an object of power that has been lost there. Sirius is adopted by a girl named Kathleen, who is Irish and whose father has been imprisoned for involvement in the IRA. She is living, unhappily, with somewhat abusive relatives, and her relationship with Sirius helps her to escape from the hardship of this situation. Near the end of the novel, Sirius's search has led him to join a 'wild hunt' led by a

¹⁶ Catherine Butler, 'Enchanting Places: Readers and Pilgrimage in the Novels of Diana Wynne Jones,' 2014, Available https://www.academia.edu/8239993/Enchanting_Places_Readers_and_Pilgrimage_in_the_Novels_of_Diana_Wynne_Jones, pp.11-12.

¹⁷ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p.192.

shadowy hunter figure, a ‘great dim shape’ that might have been a man on horseback or something else.¹⁸

Jones sets up the mythical connections for us early in the novel. Sirius the dog has red ears, and Kathleen reads a passage from a book of fairy stories that describes the hounds of Arawn having similar markings.¹⁹ Sirius-the-star is in the constellation Orion’s belt; Orion is, of course, another hunter figure. Butler rightly draws attention to links with Dionysus and notes that the pine-cone shape the Zoi (the power object) takes while in the Master’s control echoes Dionysus’s thyrsus.²⁰ When Kathleen and her cousins encounter the Master, Kathleen says ‘you’re not Arawn, are you?’ The boys say ‘he could be Orion or Actaeon, couldn’t he?’ ‘Or John Peel,’ one of them adds somewhat derisively. But the Master tells them ‘Don’t look too closely. The truth has no particular shape’.²¹ What is important to note at this point is that the Master can be any one of these associations, or indeed all at once, and I believe that Jones is also demonstrating that each of these names is one aspect of the same numinous power. The weight of the associations here adds to the mythic dimensions of the episode, the sense of ‘the awesome’ that Jones has written she intends to evoke when using allusions such as these.

Theme and Variations: *Fire and Hemlock*

Two of the most intertextually rich novels in Jones’s oeuvre are *Fire and Hemlock* and *Hexwood*; both are filled with references not only to figures from the ‘cauldron of story’ but to many other literary works, music, and even art. Much has been written about *Fire and Hemlock*, and many have noted its complex intertextuality. Although superficially it is a variant on the Tam Lin ballad, Jones interweaves many other stories. Mendlesohn writes that *Fire and Hemlock* ‘is constructed of mise en abyme, in which each element of intertextuality ... reflects,

¹⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *Dogsbody* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1975), p. 173.

¹⁹ Jones, *Dogsbody*, p. 50.

²⁰ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p. 192.

²¹ Jones, *Dogsbody*, p. 185.

reproduces, or comments on aspects of what we might call the primary narrative'.²² She argues that it is 'told on a continuous feedback loop: each new element as it is introduced parallels, reflects, or mirrors the story as told so far'.²³ Jones writes that she learned this kind of reflective, repetitive structure, from reading *Piers Plowman*, and also from hearing Tolkien lecturing about plot structure. She provides such insights into the novel's intricacies in 'The Heroic Ideal,' where she also writes that Spenser showed her how to share an allegorical role 'among many characters, each of whom is some aspect of it'.²⁴ She does this with Tom and Polly in *Fire and Hemlock*, and, as we'll see, with the characters in *Hexwood*. Along with the myth and folklore background, Jones acknowledges the importance of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, as I will discuss more fully in a later chapter. Jones also stresses the importance of Cupid and Psyche as an intertext, admitting that this story is deliberately not mentioned in the book because 'powerful stories like that always pull their weight better for only being hinted at'.²⁵

Jones writes that once she'd settled on founding the story in Tam Lin 'about ninety other myths and folktales proceeded to manifest, in and out all the time, like fish in dark water'.²⁶ This is a striking image, striking enough to inspire me to use it as the title of my thesis. I will return to it in more detail in my conclusion, but for now it is enough to say that I believe it is taken from one of the books that Tom sends to Polly, and which is, in fact, Polly's favourite of all the books she receives from him the first Christmas after he meets her: *Henrietta's House*, by Elizabeth Goudge.

Thirty-one books, stories and poems are named in *Fire and Hemlock*, all of

²² Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 159.

²³ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 159.

²⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 79-98 (p. 92).

²⁵ Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal', p. 96.

²⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, 'Answers to Some Questions,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp.115-133 (p. 126).

which have some connection with the story even if minor; indeed, it would be possible to write an entire thesis simply about those thirty-one works. Tom sends many of them to the young Polly, first to educate her in her role as a hero and then to warn her as explicitly as he can about the situation he is in. Woven through the narrative are also the pictures that Tom inherits from Laurel, which have intertextual echoes of their own if one is familiar with their models: a fairground scene, a Chinese painting of a horse, pink and blue harlequins (which turns out to be an original Picasso), people playing a violin (this is not identified but the description sounds like Chagall), the fire and hemlock photo (which was Jones's own). The most significant of the literary sources are *The Golden Bough*, *East of the Sun West of the Moon* (itself a variant of the Cupid and Psyche myth), and *The Oxford Book of Ballads*, which contains both 'Tam Lin' and 'Thomas the Rhymer'.

When Polly tells Tom that she thinks she's getting a bit old for fairy tales, Tom rebukes her, saying 'Each [fairy story] has a true, strange fact hidden in it, you know, which you can find if you look'.²⁷ When, indeed, she reads *East of the Sun West of the Moon*, Polly thought 'The girl had only herself to blame for her troubles. She was told not to do a thing and she did [...]. Polly despised her'.²⁸ However, she does not take the lesson to heart, and of course, Polly ends up doing precisely the same thing, with the same disastrous results. She guiltily uses a spell to spy on Tom, even though she has been told she must not, just like the girl in the fairy tale, and despite Tom's warnings. This gives Laurel the opportunity, in turn, to put a spell on Polly, causing her to lose her memories of Tom and replacing those memories with a single, mundane narrative in which neither he nor any of their shared adventures exist. A book she unpacks when she is beginning her term at Oxford university startles her into remembering, and she struggles to piece together their shared story and to reconstruct whatever it was she did to make her lose her memory. Her life without Tom is dull and colourless; writing an essay on Keats, she quotes a line from 'Ode to a Nightingale': 'As though of hemlock I had

²⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Fire & Hemlock* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 178.

²⁸ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 186.

drunk'.²⁹ This, of course, is the hemlock of the novel's title; the drowsy numbness reflects Polly's state when under Laurel's spell, but the call of the nightingale is the creative spirit that she shares with Tom. 'If a book set you off,' says Granny, 'a book may help again when you've fetched it out of you'.³⁰ It is finally music - a recording of the now-accomplished cellist Tom - that brings the last memory to life, but she is helped by two books that she pulls at random from her shelves: *East of the Sun West of the Moon* and the book of ballads, which falls open at 'Tam Lin'.

Caroline Webb makes the interesting point that one buried motif in the novel is 'play' – Webb has counted at least twenty separate forms of play mentioned or enacted in the text. This, she argues, is a token of the importance that creativity holds in the novel: 'Creativity in *Fire and Hemlock* takes labour, but it does so because it matters. Tom plays the cello professionally, [...] and "hero business" itself is not just what Polly's mother scornfully calls "One of your make-believes" but a fantasy narrative with its own coherence that turns out to be deeply implicated in Tom's and Polly's actual experience'.³¹

Martha Hixon has written a very thorough and convincing discussion of the structure of *Fire and Hemlock* and the way that Jones portrays the importance of the creative imagination. Hixon argues that the structure of *Fire and Hemlock* is multilayered and spiral: the layers connect through repeated motifs drawn from music, folktale, and literature.³² Thus far, this is consistent with Jones' own description of her approach to the novel. Hixon goes further, though, and suggests that there are three dimensions in the narrative: the ordinary events of Polly's

²⁹ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 345.

³⁰ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 340.

³¹ Caroline Webb, *Fantasy and the Real World in British Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 18.

³² Martha P. Hixon, 'The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Dimensions and Their Interplay in *Fire and Hemlock*,' In *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Ed. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 96-107 (p. 96).

childhood, the sphere of the creative imagination, and the supernatural realm.³³ The characters' roles reflect those spheres: ordinary people, 'superheroes' in Tom and Polly's imaginative game, and players in Laurel's game. It is interesting to note that there is a similar structure in *Hexwood*, but the strand that one might think is 'ordinary events' is, in fact, one of the role-plays invented by the bannus, or artificial intelligence.

'Real medievalizing fun': *Hexwood*

Hexwood is indeed one of Jones's most narratively sophisticated and heavily allusive works, and I intend here to look more closely at the many intertextual allusions in this novel. What I will demonstrate is that rather than simple one-on-one equivalences, the allusions, whether direct or contradictory, accumulate not only to create a thematic picture of the use and abuse of power, but also to allow Jones, through the characters' associations with Arthurian figures, to rehabilitate the outcome of the legend of Arthur and to demonstrate the fluidity of subjective identity.

Before turning to an analysis of Jones's use of Arthurian allusions in *Hexwood*, I will attempt a brief summary of the main plot of the story. It opens with bureaucrats in a multi-planetary company receiving word that there is a problem with an old artificial intelligence installation at one of their branches on Earth. The narrative is non-linear and fragmented, but over the course of the story we learn that the company is an 'evil corporation' writ large, exploiting resources across many worlds and run by a group of five 'Reigners,' who are holding ruthlessly on to power. The artificial intelligence, a machine called a bannus, sets up virtual reality role-playing games; its original purpose had been to run simulations that would test potential 'Reigners,' but the current Reigner One has been keeping it firmly under his own control. An ambitious and somewhat unscrupulous office clerk on Earth finds the bannus and starts it up, asking for a roleplaying game to help him pass the time. All the characters in the book,

³³ Hixon, 'Nowhere', p. 97.

including all five Reigners, find themselves in the ‘bannus field,’ often playing roles that are reminiscent of various Arthurian legends. Readers encounter all the main characters as figures within the Reigner Corporation and as at least one role in the bannus field. This is further complicated by one character, Ann Stavely, whose name in the Reigner corporation is Vierran, hearing ‘voices’ who also turn out to have ‘real’ identities, and among those ‘real’ identities are King Arthur and Merlin, who have themselves taken on roles in the Reigner Corporation over the millennia. The chief Reigner turns into a dragon. Part of the game of reading the novel is piecing together who is who. Ultimately, it transpires that the Bannus has its own agenda: to overthrow the corrupt Reigners and put a new group in power; I will, by the way, adopt Jones’s own practice of capitalizing the Bannus when referring to it as a character with its own agency and using lower case to refer to the machine.

Jones writes that she had ‘real medievalizing fun translating chunks of Arthurian stories into a story about a super-computer’.³⁴ Not only does she use the raw material of Arthurian legend, she also references — both directly and indirectly — Arthuriana from the middle ages to the Twentieth century. As well, she alludes to popular quest-related fantasy, including works by J.R.R. Tolkien, Ursula Le Guin and C.S. Lewis. An ‘allusion hunt’ through Hexwood is both productive and frustrating: productive because it is possible to find references hiding behind almost every tree in Banners Wood, but frustrating because many, if not most, of the references are imprecise or even downright contradictory, or because characters, such as Mordion, one of the main protagonists, can be seen to encompass a wide range of possible associations. In Appendix A, I have provided a table that outlines the many associations I have identified; I suspect these are not exhaustive.

An illustration of the multiple possibilities of intertextual allusion can be provided by a simple example. Different critics provide different interpretations of the name given to the robot figure who turns out to be the Bannus. It calls itself Yam, explained in the text as being short for ‘Yamaha’: obviously, it is a Japanese

³⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Inventing the Middle Ages,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 196-210 (pp. 209-10).

manufactured machine. Katherine Rumbold claims this is a reference to the Old Testament deity's description of himself as 'I am'.³⁵ Susan Ang reads the name as 'May' backwards, in reference to what she sees as the theme of possibility in the book.³⁶ Either makes complete sense, but any attempt to argue for the 'rightness' of one or the other would lessen the allusive effect. Such ambiguity, of course, is typical of Jones's technique both in this work and throughout her books. Nevertheless, the allusions, whether direct or contradictory, accumulate not only to create a thematic picture of the use and abuse of power, but also to allow Jones, through the characters' associations with Arthurian figures, to rehabilitate the outcome of the legend of Arthur.

As mentioned, all the re-creations of Arthurian or fantasy quest situations that occur in the bannus field were prompted by Harrison, a junior member of the Reigner corporation, asking the bannus for a role-playing game. In a climactic moment, he yells at the bannus 'I asked you for hobbits on a Grail quest, and not one hobbit have I seen!'³⁷ In fact, close reading can suggest that the hobbits *are* there, at least referentially. Hume and Martin, who are eventually revealed to be Merlin and a Norse mythical figure Fitela, respectively, are portrayed as youthful or boyish. Martin is 'the boy' among Ann/Vierran's voices. Yet, at the end of the book, both characters are shown to be small, somewhat bow-legged, and considerably older than they look. Martin acknowledges that he was always 'child-sized': 'Gnomes, both of us [referring to himself and Hume]'.³⁸ When Hume fights the dragon, Orm Pender, he shouts insults - 'Big teddy-face - fatso - half-breed - stupid old Orm' - that recall Bilbo's taunts to the Mirkwood spiders in *The Hobbit*.

Reigner One's real name — Orm Pender — has irresistible (at least to this reader) associations with another work of heroic fantasy: Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea*

³⁵ Margaret Rumbold, 'Taking the Subject Further,' *Papers*, 7:2 (1997), 16-28 (p.26).

³⁶ Susan Ang, 'Dogmata, Catastrophe, and the Renaissance of Fantasy in Diana Wynne Jones,' *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 34: 3 (Sept 2010), 284-302 (p. 295).

³⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Hexwood* (London: Methuen, 1993), p.256.

³⁸ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 279.

trilogy, especially when we discover that Reigner One can change his shape into that of a dragon. There are several dragons in Earthsea with the name Orm, and Ged meets a dragon of Pendor. Of course, both Le Guin and Jones are using the Norse or Old English name 'Orm' for 'Wyrn' or dragon, but there are other connections between the works. In one of Le Guin's related short stories, 'The Rule of Names,' we learn that the dragon of Pendor is capable of shape-changing; he appears in human form as a wizard named 'Mr Underhill' - which itself probably not coincidentally recalls the pseudonym Frodo assumes when he sets out on his ring quest. The central conflict of *The Wizard of Earthsea* involves the main character, Ged, coming to terms with his own 'shadow' self, and thus becoming whole. In much the same way, Mordion ultimately learns to forgive himself for his own dark past and is able to take on the role of leader of the Reigners.

Alongside that of Tolkien and Le Guin, some of C.S. Lewis's work captures elements of medieval romance and contains images that are reflected in *Hexwood*. In one of Ann's early visits to Banners Wood, which is under the influence of the bannus field, she and Hume discover a lake, on the opposite shore of which is a castle. The clearing where they find the lake is characterised by a 'swimming, milky lightness, fogged with green,' and the lake itself has ripples where there is no wind, possibly arising from a hidden spring. The lake is a kind of 'nowhere' in a space - the bannus field - that is already nowhere, a liminal space that recalls the 'wood between the worlds' of *The Magician's Nephew*, dotted with portal pools, and with some of its numinous power. This lake also recalls the pool featured in the climactic scenes of Jones's *Fire and Hemlock*, which has a similar symbolic weight. Ann feels an inexplicable sense of sadness when she looks across at the castle that she and Hume believe to be a place of marvels. This sadness reflects the elegaic quality sustained in Jones's greatest works, that I shall discuss in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Most of the main characters in the story are given roles in the bannus field that either echo or have direct associations with a figure in Arthurian legend. Their 'field' names recall both their own names and the role they are playing in the bannus recreation. So, Reigner Two becomes Sir Ambitas, lord of 'the castle,' obviously intended to be a 'fisher king' character, except that his 'wound' - usually

ripe with symbolism of a dying king of an infertile and dying land - is a bruised stomach from taking the flat of a blade swung at him by one of his own staff. Reigner Three becomes Morgan La Trey, an obvious analogue for the scheming Morgan La Faye.

Reigner Four becomes Sir Fors, analogous in one sense to the Arthurian Sir Bors. Sir Fors is a kind of generic knight, athletic, hearty and robust but, unlike the knights of legend, inwardly corrupt. His green cloak might hint at *Gawain and the Green Knight*, but any attempt to associate him with Gawain, or with any 'good' knight, would be a wasted effort. When he is about to lead an expedition to the village for food, he says to himself 'Our strength is as the strength of ten because our cause is just' and wonders 'how did I think of that? [...] That's good!'³⁹ In fact, it's a quotation, or a misquotation, from Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad,' where the line reads 'because my heart is pure'. The Reigners' cause is anything but just or pure; nor is Sir Fors, for that matter. Vierran discovers that he grabs any lady in the castle whom he finds alone.⁴⁰ And he did 'his generous, laughing best to make sure Sir Bedefer stayed one notch below him in the castle hierarchy'.⁴¹ Sir Bedford/Bedefer, however, matches both in loyalty and honour his Arthurian counterpart Bedivere, the good knight trusted to return Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake and to witness the death of Arthur. Although given a role to play by the false knights in the Bannus Castle, Bedford abandons his post and joins the band of outlaws led by Sir Artegal.

Sir Bedford wears a red cross on his shield when he rides out, and this figure of a 'red cross knight,' along with the name 'Artegal,' introduces another significant intertext for *Hexwood: Spenser's Faerie Queene*. Sir Artegal is the central figure of Book Five of the *Faerie Queene*, the book of Justice (it is important to note that the Reigners preside over the House of Justice); Artegal the knight travels with a metal man named Talus, a figure obviously reflected in Yam, the robot who serves, or appears to serve, Hume and Mordion in the bannus field. Talus is the iron hand,

³⁹ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 149.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 212.

⁴¹ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 148.

meting out punishment without hesitation, whereas Artegal tempers everything with justice. Jones plays with this concept interestingly in the respective roles of Mordion and Yam, where Mordion is the executioner for the Reigners but hates doing it and feels bitter remorse for his actions. Some lines of Book Five reflect the state of affairs in Bannus Castle, and the need for the scales of justice to be balanced:

For that which all men then did vertue call,
Is now cald vice; and that which vice was hight,
Is now hight vertue, and so vs'd of all:
Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right,
As all things else in time are chaunged quight. (V. 35-39)

Although the character known as Artegal in *Hexwood* turns out to be the ‘real’ Arthur Pendragon, Arthur is a separate character in Spenser’s work, and the role of Artegal in the *Faerie Queene* is more closely echoed by that of Mordion Agenos in *Hexwood*. The similarity in names, and the confusion, is even noted by another of the ‘players’ in the story: when Reigner Five warns those in the castle to beware of Mordion, Ambitas thinks he is referring to Artegal. Reigner Five is puzzled, ‘until it occurred to him that Agenos and Artegal were somewhat similar names. No doubt this was what Mordion was calling himself now’.⁴²

Again, I don’t believe that Jones intends us to make direct and specific connections between text and intertext(s). Often, she works directly against the expectations that have been raised by our knowledge of genre or earlier works. Sometimes several characters can be seen to embody certain Arthurian tropes; for example, several figures — Reigner Five, Martellian released from his prison, and Mordion — are seen to be living like hermits in the woods. Reigner Two’s bruised stomach and Hume’s eye infection can both be associated with aspects of the Fisher King, and Mordion, too, is a Fisher King figure.

⁴² Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 167.

A significant instance of Jones working against our expectations is through the character Hume. He is a boy, without parents, raised in the forest by a magical guardian, and we are obviously expected to see him, as he sees himself, as a potential King Arthur. At one point, he pulls a sword out of a stone, and Ann says, drily, ‘What’s its name? Excalibur?’⁴³ Farah Mendlesohn calls attention to the echoes of T.H. White: ‘The boy has no past and little sense of self. But he does have a future, and a future that has already happened’.⁴⁴ Hume, however, is not the ‘once and future king’: he is better with magic than with swordplay, and turns out to be, in fact, an ancestor of Mordion’s: the rebel Reigner Martellian, who once came to Earth as Merlin and was imprisoned there. His eye infection invites association as well with the Norse god Odin, as I discussed in Chapter One.

Vierran, whose bannus-name ‘Ann’ has no immediately obvious Arthurian counterpart (although Vierran might suggest Vivian, Merlin’s lover), is, however, associated intertextually with at least two heroines from Arthurian literature. Early in the story, she is ill in bed, unable to look out the window. One of her ‘voices’ suggests that she rig up a mirror over her bed that will allow her to see the world going by. She herself remarks on the similarity to Tennyson’s *Lady of Shalott*: ‘Fool woman in that fool poem we learnt last term!’⁴⁵ But Merlin also has a mirror, and in Book III of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, Britomart, the lady knight, is given a vision in Merlin’s mirror of Artegall as the man she is to marry. Later, Merlin prophecies that Britomart and Artegall’s descendants will oust the invader Saxons from Britain and produce a family of rulers. Ann sees Mordion arriving at Hexwood farm in her mirror; as her adult self, Vierran is in love with Mordion, and they, united, have the potential to oust the wicked Reigners and restore health to the House of Balance. In Spenser, it is the goddess Astraea, the basis of the figure of Justice with her scales, who gives Artegall his task. It is possible to see the role of Astraea as being assumed by the Bannus, pushing Mordion in his Artegall-role to restore justice to the House of Balance.

⁴³ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 154.

⁴⁴ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p.72.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 23.

Bloodlines are an important aspect of the Reigners' hold on power, and through this connection with the prophecy about Britomart's children, appear to be a factor in the ascendance of a new 'hand' of Reigners to replace the corrupt Orm Pender and his crew. Indeed, there is a curious recurring notion in the book of inbreeding and incest, perhaps in keeping with the mythical backgrounds that Jones is mining. Reigner One uses inbreeding to keep control of the Reigners, but we learn that Martellian, the 'good' Reigner, also saw to it that his blood was passed on, and there is an implication that Martin/'boy'/Fitela is one of his offspring. Fitela himself stands out as a somewhat odd choice among the figures who represent Merlin, Arthur and other round-table knights, unless one sees him as an example of incest. He is a relatively obscure character in Norse sagas, with a one-line mention in *Beowulf*, and he has a bit part in the *Volsung Saga*, where he is the son of Sigrud, born of an incestuous relationship. In his incarnation as one of Vierran's 'voices,' he is described as 'stuck on the edge of nowhere, being a sort of assistant to a man who had lived so long ago that people thought of him as a god'.⁴⁶ Of course, the tragic end of Arthur's reign is brought about by the offspring of his incestuous relationship with his half-sister Morgause, and the name of the son who grows up to destroy the round table is Mordred: inescapably similar to Mordion.

Mordion Agenos is one character who embodies many, if not all, important aspects of Arthurian and fantasy associations. As Mordred, he is the bastard son of the king, destined to overthrow and replace his father; Mordion was the product of eugenics by Orm Pender, isolated as a child and forced to learn to be an assassin. Ultimately, although Hume seriously wounds Orm in his dragon shape, Mordion's is the hand to give Orm the final dispatch. Mordion's appearance and life-style in the forest recalls Lancelot run mad after betraying Guinevere; Ann/Vierran's association with *The Lady of Shallot* may also reinforce Mordion's connection with Lancelot. But Merlin, too, lived like a hermit in the forest, especially in early versions of his story, and we see Mordion commanding quite considerable magic power when he allows himself to. Merlin is known, also in early tales, for his

⁴⁶ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 20.

laugh;⁴⁷ Mordion's sweet smile is mentioned throughout the story, and his ability to heal himself from emotional damage begins when he is able to laugh. Although Hume is revealed to be the 'real' Merlin, Mordion's foster-care of him when the bannus represents Hume as a helpless child suggests Merlin's role as guardian with the young Arthur. In many ways, Mordion also recalls Gandalf: the scene where he presents magical entertainment at the castle, with streamers exhaling sweet scents over the audience, has strong echoes of Gandalf's fireworks display at the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The glowing blue light at the tip of his staff is also reminiscent of Gandalf's. As mentioned above, through his relationship with Vierran, he can be associated with Artegall in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; Vierran's expert horsemanship and her overall gumption can align her with the figure of Britomart, and together she and Mordion will bring a brighter future to both the House of Balance and to England. Finally, Mordion is quite clearly a Fisher King character, but I wish to develop this concept in a later chapter, along with my discussion of *The Homeward Bounders* and a return to *Fire and Hemlock*.

Margaret Rumbold argues that the subjectivities of both Ann/Vierran and Mordion are constructed as 'disjointed and dispersed and not as autonomous entities'.⁴⁸ All the characters are descended from the Reigners, but she notes that the fantasy conventions of the notion of some kind of destiny or power assumed through birthright are overturned.⁴⁹ There is no single saviour figure. While Rumbold suggests that any attempt to make connections is largely fruitless — sometimes clear, sometimes not — I would argue that all the connections are fruitful. Jones's representation of identity, as expressed metaphorically through the multiple intertextual associations, is complex and sophisticated. No individual can

⁴⁷ Most notably in *The Romance of Silence*, which Peter H. Goodrich suggests follows a convention in Welsh tradition of Merlin's sardonic laughter. Peter H. Goodrich and Raymond H. Thompson Eds, *Merlin A Casebook* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 14.

⁴⁸ Margaret Rumbold, 'Taking the Subject Further,' *Papers*, 7:2 (1997), 16-28 (p.23)

⁴⁹ Rumbold, p. 23.

be identified as the ‘saviour figure’ because any of several characters has the potential to become a saviour.

It is worth noting that this fluidity also reflects the Arthurian source material, where clear identities are often not made: characters evolve or become conflated with other characters. Kathryn Hume draws attention to the very important concept of individuation that she believes occurs only after the Renaissance.⁵⁰ She argues that the concept of the individual, so important in our world, was far less important to writers of the Middle Ages or earlier. Modern fantasy allows us the opportunity to explore characters within a known ‘story space’ setting, to bring individuation to characters who would otherwise only act out roles.

Martha Hixon argues that the novel, by ‘mimicking or enacting’ the process whereby an author creates a story, demonstrates to a reader that self-realization is an ongoing process.⁵¹ I would suggest that it also encourages readers to reject a role or identity that is imposed upon them, and allows freedom to experiment with roles. As with *Fire and Hemlock* and *The Game*, the various intertextual references allow characters in the novel and readers themselves to ‘pull the possibilities’ — a phrase from *Conrad’s Fate* — and try on different roles and even outcomes.

Hixon notes ‘*Hexwood* exemplifies the narrative theory of performativity, that identity is a created concept built up by reenactment over time and experience’.⁵² It is important to recognize, however, that alongside the performative aspects of ‘roles’, Jones seems to be arguing for an essential self, that can be manipulated by others, such as the Reigners or the Bannus, but that remains untouched. Recognition and acceptance of external aspects of character allow characters to return to their essential selves and escape the manipulation of the

⁵⁰ Katherine Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Response to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen, 1984), Kindle edition, Loc. 834.

⁵¹ Martha Hixon, ‘Whose Woods These Are I Think I Know. Narrative Theory and Diana Wynne Jones’s *Hexwood*,’ *Telling Children’s Stories. Narrative Theory and Children’s Literature*, Ed. Mike Cadden (Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska Press), pp.251-267 (p.251).

⁵² Hixon, ‘Whose Woods’, p. 259.

Bannus. Beneath all the roles they are forced into either by the bannus or through their own birth or status, there is a fundamental sense of self: Artegal says of Mordion, ‘This man and I have known one another, at the level of souls, where one mind knows another’s true nature, and I can thereby assure you that there is nothing to hate or fear in him. At that level, you do not know a man’s given name. I called him one thing in my mind, and he called me another’.⁵³ Jones makes the argument that people can’t be forced to do anything that is against their natures, but Ann points out ‘People can be adapted. *You’ve* been adapted Yam. And people have all sorts of queer bits in their natures that the Bannus could work on’.⁵⁴ It is interesting that twenty-one-year old Vierran shares the cut on her knee that she experienced as twelve-year old Ann. Even age, then, becomes something that can be a perception to be altered by the bannus.

Robyn McCallum, writing about Jill Paton Walsh’s *Unleaving*, makes several points that can be applied to *Hexwood*. In *Unleaving*, the reader encounters two points of view — ‘Gran’ and ‘Madge’ — alternating through the book, in what the reader discovers are also two different time periods, though the timelessness of familiar summer activities such as picnics on the beach add to Walsh’s ability to disguise the truth. ‘Gran’ is an old lady whose children and grandchildren are visiting her house in Cornwall for the summer. ‘Madge’ is a girl who spends summers with her grandmother in Cornwall, and who inherits her house when she dies. It is not until the end of the novel that we realize fully that ‘Gran’ and ‘Madge’ are the same person. This has a distancing effect, but also makes us reflect on how she is the same person but different. The focalization techniques in *Hexwood* contribute to the reader’s confusion about what is going on, but also reflect, in a metafictional way, the process experienced by the characters in the novel. Of *Unleaving*, McCallum writes ‘an odd effect of Walsh’s strategy is that while by the end of the novel we know that Madge and Gran are the same character [...] it is still difficult not to think of them as two different characters, because they occupy different subject positions which, for readers, exist

⁵³ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 262.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 67.

simultaneously'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, she writes, 'Walsh's strategies actually deny readers a position from which to identify fully with either Madge or Gran, and thereby encourage a retrospective and analytic reading.'⁵⁶ Much the same can be said of the reading experience of *Hexwood*; it is particularly difficult to conceive of 'Ann' and 'Vierran' as not being different characters, because they are introduced to us as separate focalizing characters.

What I hope to have shown here is that, while *Hexwood* is rich with intertextual allusions, any attempt to identify simple one-on-one equivalences, for example that Mordion 'equals' Mordred, will limit the interpretive experience and to some extent miss the point. Jones's allusions are complex and dialogic; one connection can set off multiple possibilities all of which can have metaphorical impact and weight. Patterns in the narratives recur, but change, much like the movement of 'fish in dark water'. In *Hexwood*, we see repeated concrete images: an empty crisp packet, the hail stones on the road, Ann repeatedly crossing the stream. The same thing happens over and over again, but each time slightly and subtly different. This notion can also be applied to Jones's treatment of the intertextual material; here and elsewhere in her work, stories and character types are repeatedly born anew, each time with variations.

Hexwood is a narrative jigsaw puzzle; it really requires a second or even a third reading simply to piece together the intricacies of the main plotline. Like any of Jones's works, it could be read without an understanding or recognition of the complexity of the intertextual references. A casual reader could still enjoy the notion of the artificial intelligence setting up a role-playing game — 'hobbits on a grail quest' — and root for Vierran and Mordion to get together and to overthrow the corrupt Reigners. Stories of King Arthur and the knights of the round table are fairly pervasive in popular culture, as are heroic quests. It does not take an encyclopaedic knowledge of Arthurian myth to catch some of the references. However, we should compare Jones's use of the material to other retellings. The

⁵⁵ Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction, The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (London: Garland, 1999), p. 135.

⁵⁶ McCallum, p. 136.

most important difference is that in all traditional versions of the story of the life and death of Arthur the outcome is the same; it is a tragedy, whether we focus on the doomed love between Lancelot and Guinevere, or on Mordred, the son growing up to overthrow his father. Merlin is trapped in a cave; Arthur sleeps on the Isle of Avalon until Britain's need wakens him and he returns. Jones offers different possibilities. Yes, Mordion-as-Mordred overthrows his progenitor (Reigner One), but this is seen to be a positive outcome, not a tragedy. Arthur lives on to be one of a new 'hand' of Reigners that will end the corruption and exploitation of his predecessors. Merlin is released from his cave. If we see one of Mordion's roles to be that of Lancelot, he is united with his love. The Lady of Shallot doesn't die when the mirror cracks.

In all the works we have seen in this chapter, and in most of her work as a whole, Jones takes advantage of her power as a storyteller and the freedom granted by the creative imagination to subvert and rehabilitate what might have been considered fixed outcomes based on previous stories. Romeo and Juliet live happily ever after. Big Brother watches out for his sister, and that helps him to be a better person. As we will see in a later chapter, Hayley, the girl who traverses Jones's mythosphere, is able to create an outcome for the story of Actaeon where he is not torn apart by his own dogs. She herself brings about positive change in her family by overthrowing tyranny, just as Mordion does. Polly, in the role of 'Janet' in the Tam Lin ballad, succeeds not by holding on to her love, but by letting go. That, too, will be discussed in more detail in a future chapter. The most important 'rule' in Jones's work is that there are no rules. Story is not destiny.

Chapter Three: Subverting ‘The Rules’

Introduction

Power dynamics are a recurring and important theme in Jones’s work; indeed, questions of power are central to any discussion of children’s literature, where the balance of power is seen to lie with the hands of parents and of those who write for children, as well as others such as teachers and librarians, rather than in those of the supposed audience. John Stephens argues that implicit authorial control is a characteristic marker of children’s fiction, and that readers are therefore susceptible to the power of point of view to impose a subject position.¹ It can be argued that authors, like Jones, who write ‘difficult’ texts, employing strategies such as intertextuality that require a certain skill to navigate, widen the perceived power gap. One of the charges laid against authors — either for adults or for children — who incorporate references to other literary works or to mythology is that they will appeal only to a fairly elite group. Christine Wilkie-Stubbs suggests that the dynamic and spatial model of intertextuality has particular implications in children’s literature because of the imbalanced power relationship in the writer/reader axis.² However, David Rudd argues that, if we are to escape the all-too-common notion that children are ‘helpless, powerless being[s]’ in the thrall of the adult world, or as per Jacqueline Rose’s argument (1984)³ that children are a cultural trope created by adults to represent some unreal concept of innocence, we

¹ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (Harlow, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1992), p. 27.

² Christine Wilkie-Stubbs, ‘Intertextuality and the Child Reader’, in *Understanding Children’s Literature: Key Essays from the Second Edition of the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, Ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 16-179 (p. 169).

³ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case for Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*, (London: Macmillan, 1984).

need to apply a ‘Foucauldian notion of power as both repressive and productive’.⁴ He is not writing about Jones, but he could be. In this chapter, I argue, as I have elsewhere,⁵ that one of Jones’s ‘projects’ is to give readers power by stimulating their creativity and their ability to see beyond the ‘rules’, whether of genre tropes or of the adult world. Jones, while maintaining authorial control, demonstrates to her readers that they should resist any imposed point of view. Although she herself employs subtle forms of readerly coercion, she provides readers with the power to recognize and to resist them.

Farah Mendlesohn makes the important point that ‘hidden knowledge’ in what she calls the ‘deep secret’ books, *Deep Secret* and *The Merlin Conspiracy*, gives characters ‘a lever to move the world’. She writes ‘A protagonist’s success in these books hinges in part not only on learning the rules but also in the willingness to climb right out of the framework to challenge destiny’. She also notes significantly that knowledge of the deep secret does not necessarily structure the plot of a story, nor dictate its conclusion.⁶ It is important to make a distinction here between ‘knowledge’ - which in Jones’s universe means understanding that a character has achieved through his or her own efforts - and assumptions. Over and over again, Jones represents characters starting with faulty assumptions about themselves or about their destiny based on what they have been told or on the ‘rules’ of the society in which they live. Mendlesohn’s point is, however, consistent with what I have shown in the previous chapter: that an essential tenet of Jones’s narrative strategy is that stories do not have a pre-determined outcome, nor is character destiny. Not only does Jones represent numerous models of tyranny and

⁴ David Rudd, ‘Theorising and Theories. How Does Children’s Literature Exist?’ in *Understanding Children’s Literature: Key Essays from the Second Edition of the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*, Ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 15-29 (p. 25).

⁵ See my article ‘Why don’t you be a tiger?’.

⁶ Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 46.

characters who are able to escape it through the use of their wits, or by ‘looking sideways’ at problems, she also demonstrates for readers that the ‘rules’ of story or of genre are unpredictable and can be disrupted.

One does not have to look far to find models of near-totalitarian power structures in Jones’s work, or strong-willed and powerful characters who impose their will upon others; not all are malignant, and, indeed, often protagonists grow up to discover they are part of a power structure and need their strength of character both to wield their power and to avoid allowing themselves to misuse it. The town that is the setting of *Archer’s Goon* is ‘farmed’ by extra-terrestrial godlike beings; Howard Sykes, the protagonist, eventually discovers that he is one of them, and realizes that ‘he would have to bring himself up not to be Venturus [his identity as one of the ruling siblings]’.⁷ Christopher Chant, in the Chrestomanci series, grows up to become *the* Chrestomanci, the powerful bureaucrat who monitors the use of magic throughout the multiverse, and Cat Chant discovers that he is the Chrestomanci’s heir. Christopher Chant, in particular, is shown to be extremely headlong and bossy (once he comes out from under the thumb of his wicked uncle). He learns to modify his behaviour through his relationship with friends and with others who become his colleagues at Chrestomanci Castle.

Part of a character’s learning process is often to discover that he need not necessarily follow ‘the rules’ but can overcome dangers by coming at things sideways. Cat Chant is left-handed, but his original guardians have taught him that he must use only his right hand. His power is freed when he is freed from that ‘rule’. Christopher Chant meets a race of powerful and extremely selfish individuals in Series Eleven, and works out that he can combat them if he comes at them obliquely: ‘you seemed to have to work in a way that was tipped sideways from the way you did it on any other world, with a bend and a ripple to the magic’.⁸

Martha Hixon has noted that sometimes Jones’s approach to governance appears to be rather conservative: for example, the Chrestomanci organization is

⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Archer’s Goon* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 241.

⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (London: Methuen, 1988), p. 234.

benign, but does to some extent limit the freedom of others to act as they will. I will return to this question later in this chapter, but for now I believe that for Jones the important freedom is to be able to question authority. It is those who obey unthinkingly or follow ‘rules’ blindly who will come to grief. Therefore, a benign organization such as Chrestomanci’s may indeed be something of a dictatorship, but the Chrestomanci is at least willing to change and to adapt as new ways of doing things are discovered, as we see happening in *The Pinhoe Egg*. It is worth noting, for example, that Jones represents several strict religious groups, which one might, given her antipathy to ‘rules’, expect to be represented unsympathetically. This is not always the case: Milly, the young Goddess of a very strict and bloodthirsty sect, the girl who grows up to marry Christopher Chant, is apparently going to be sacrificed to the Goddess who rules her world with absolute power; we discover later that her High Priestess has been quietly smuggling the sacrificial victims out of the world and using some of the nine lives of the temple cats to appease the Goddess. Such creative thinking is not what one would expect in a stereotypical depiction of such a religious group. Similarly, Helen, in *The Homeward Bounders*, is brought up in the House of Uquar, another strict religious order in a horrible and brutal world, but its leaders celebrate the magic arm that makes her unique rather than punishing her for it, and the training they give her helps her to overcome the powers of *Them*, the truly evil race of demons who are controlling the universe. Indeed, the central tenet of the House of Uquar is something their god (who is the figure we know as Prometheus) has taught them: ‘There are no rules, only principles and natural laws’. This could also be taken as an important tenet of Jones’s own creative strategies.

In this chapter I will first examine the way Jones uses intertextuality to subvert the ‘rules’ whether of storyline or of genre tropes, thereby giving readers power to look beyond the expectations that may have seemed ‘enforced’ by literary traditions. *Power of Three* and *The Magicians of Caprona* both depict children disappointed in themselves in the face of family expectation. In both novels, Jones uses intertextual references to highlight a thematic interest in thoughtless prejudice and the fear of the Other. Jones subverts readers’ expectations to subtly underline their own pre-conceived notions of genre or story outcomes. Next, I will

demonstrate the way that Jones uses a dialogic relationship between the direct parody of *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* and the novels *Dark Lord of Derkholm* and its sequel, *Year of the Griffin*, to make a statement not only about over-used fantasy tropes, but about our need to examine the ‘rules’ under which we live. I will then discuss two novels — *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg* — that address the misuse of power by two similarly strong-willed and manipulative individuals in communities that have become corrupted by too single-minded adherence to ‘rules’. Although intertextuality is not a particularly prominent feature of either of these works, except in the very broadest sense, I will show in my conclusion that the coercive and performative language employed by powerful individuals in these novels can be read as an analogue for the way Jones uses the power of intertextual references in her work. The difference is that while Aunt Maria and Gammer Pinhoe manipulate language in order to control their family members and their communities, Jones uses intertextuality and metafictional devices to give readers power, through their imaginations.

Family Rules: *Power of Three* and *The Magicians of Caprona*

As I will demonstrate in my next chapter, Jones uses the technique of defamiliarization in several novels, including *Power of Three*, and it is worth noting here that Catherine Butler equates this technique with the discourse of power and personal autonomy, giving readers ‘the means to question prescribed norms of knowledge and behaviour, and to resist those who would impose such norms for their own ends’.⁹ I believe that defamiliarization can apply not just to objects in our world (for example, the radio carried by one character that other characters assume is magic), but also to myths, stories and literary sources. By presenting them in different ways, Jones can portray varying points of view and create something new out of the stories. Margaret Rumbold writes of the novel

⁹ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children’s Fantasies Of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), p. 238.

Power of Three that it draws on intertextual references (fairy tale giants, a Christian notion of sacrificial death, and legends of bargains with fairies), but that ‘intertextuality is not used as a strategy for reflecting the interplay of subjects and social discourses which form subjectivity’.¹⁰ I disagree. In fact, Jones demonstrates the way that knowledge of narratives such as the ones she uses intertextually can lead characters to misplaced beliefs about themselves and mislead readers along with them, as we saw with the character Hume in *Hexwood*. I believe that Jones subverts the literary traditions she uses intertextually and often goes counter to both the assumptions of characters in the story and our own as readers. We should regard *Power of Three* in one sense as a meta-myth, a comment on the way we create stories about the ‘other’.

Power of Three opens as what is apparently an immersive fantasy, in which a group of fairy-like beings who live under mounds in the earth are threatened by shape-changers, who live underwater, or seem to, and by giants. It is only gradually that we learn that the ‘Giants’ are humans in our own world, and that the two other races are not as different from each other as they first appear. As readers, we naturally align ourselves with the focalizing character, in this case Gair and his family, and with the attitudes towards the outside world that they express. We accept that the ‘Giants’ and the ‘Dorig’ are enemies, and this acceptance is reinforced not only by the tone of the introduction, with its folk-tale-like narrator who transports us to the ‘story world’, but also by our own expectations based on our knowledge of fairy tales. We accept the tradition, and only gradually come to understand that we are not in the ‘story world’ but in our own. We see a blurring of the lines between fantasy and reality: Jones offers us the possibility of a magic world that is hidden in our own world and accessible to us all.

Where Jones is somewhat more traditional is in the narrative arc belonging to Gair, the central protagonist, which, as Margaret Rumbold points out, is in keeping with conventional genre expectations. Gair believes himself to be unexceptional, finding it difficult to live up to having a father who is a hero and a

¹⁰ Margaret Rumbold, ‘Taking the Subject Further’, *Papers*, 7:2 (1997), 16-28 (p. 19).

brother and sister with the Sight. By the end of the story, of course, Gair turns out to have not one but three gifts, and thus becomes famous. However, although his own narrative arc is conventional, the working out of the central conflict is somewhat less so. The threat to the three races comes not from a supernatural enemy or evil power, but from modern development: the valley in which they live is threatened with flooding when a dam is to be built. Although the immediate threat is mundane, the supernatural is implicated in the sense that all the bad things in the valley result from a curse that came about as a result of a past encounter between the races, and the curse itself can only be lifted through cooperation between all three powers. So, it is not Gair, the ‘chosen one’, who saves the world on his own, although he is willing to give his life to help lift the curse.

Another work that foregrounds the importance of cooperation is *The Magicians of Caprona*, which, as I have shown, has as its underlying framework *Romeo and Juliet*, where two powerful households are moved by a (false) ancient grudge to perpetual feuding. Instead of Montagues and Capulets, we have Montanas and Petroccis, and Caprona stands in for Verona. We even have a son and daughter from each household who fall in love and marry against their family's wishes. However, again, simply following the lines of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* would not be of interest to Jones; indeed, the main plot-line of the story is not concerned with the lovers but with two younger members of the families, neither of whom seem to be living up to family expectations. The novel is set in the Chrestomanci universe, where magic works, and the Montanas and the Petroccis are the most famous makers of spells in this world. Everyone believes that Tonino Montana and Angelica Petrocci are the weakest members of their respective families: Tonino is unable to get spells to work at all and, although Angelica's spells work, they do so in unexpected and sometimes startling ways. As the story unfolds, both discover not only that the prejudices about the other family are untrue but also that they themselves have great talents that happen to work in new and unexpected ways. As Chrestomanci declares near the climax of the story, they are able to demonstrate that ‘a thing need not be done in the same old way in order to

work'.¹¹ The families also learn to abandon their thoughtless prejudices; in fact, they discover, as in *Power of Three*, that only through cooperation are they able to save their city from the power that threatens it.

The Montana children are told awful things about the Petrocchis, how they never went to Mass, had baths or changed their clothes. They reportedly had babies like kittens and drowned the unwanted babies, and supposedly ate their uncles and aunts. 'There were many other things besides, some of them far worse than these, for Lucia [their sister] had a vivid imagination'.¹² Paulo and Tonino Montana 'hated the Petrocchis heartily, though it was years before either of them set eyes on a Petrocchi'.¹³ When Tonino Montana meets Angelica Petrocchi, they argue vociferously about the family legends, and it is clear that Angelica has been told the same kind of lies about the Montanas: "How dare you!" said Angelica. "You eat cowpats for pizzas, and you can smell the Casa Montana right on the Corso".¹⁴ Both families believe that the feud began because one patriarch made the other 'eat his words' by disguising their spells as spaghetti. Chrestomanci tells the families that no one knows the true origin of the quarrel, but that the patriarchs have told them lies 'And you have all gone on believing their lies and getting deeper and deeper divided'.¹⁵ Fortunately, he notes, the younger members of the family are less bigoted than their elders and able to be more cooperative, with Marco and Rosa (the Romeo and Juliet analogues) even having 'the courage to fall in love and get married'.¹⁶

Both novels, then, show children daring to act against the powerful underlying narrative of 'what everyone knows', or 'what everyone believes', whether it is family tradition or a wider society. We also see children learning that they

¹¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Magicians of Caprona* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 223.

¹² Jones, *Magicians*, p. 11.

¹³ Jones, *Magicians*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴ Jones, *Magicians*, p. 124.

¹⁵ Jones, *Magicians*, p. 216.

¹⁶ Jones, *Magicians*, p. 216.

themselves are considerably greater in terms of power than what their families have seen or believed. Once again, as I've shown in the last chapter, Jones's use of intertextual references shows us as readers that knowledge of genre or literary background will only take you so far and may indeed become restrictive when it leads your expectations down the wrong path.

The Tyranny of Genre: *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* and *Dark Lord of Derkholm*

In one of her essays, 'A Talk About Rules', Jones describes working on *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* for John Clute. She writes that, while doing this, she discovered rules that had 'no business being there'.¹⁷ In the excerpt below, she outlines what she considered the clichéd aspects of the 'Rules' governing much of adult fantasy.

As for adult fantasy, the Rules have become so detailed and so firm that there really is the same book being written over and over again. The Rules here state that there are two kinds of fantasy only. Comic fantasy and high fantasy. Comic fantasy hasn't quite got its Rules in order yet, I'm glad to say, except the Rule that states you must not stray over into high. High. Well. Basically you have this large empty map. The Rules state that no fantasy is complete without a map. Your protagonist will then travel to every spot on this map - except, for some reason, most major cities marked - visiting as he/she goes such stock people as the marsh dwellers, the desert nomads, the Anglo-Saxon Cossacks, and so on, frequently collecting magical bric-a-brac on the way and putting in obligatory time as a slave somewhere. At the end of this tour, he/she will either return to the mundane world through a portal or be crowned a monarch, whichever is appropriate. This of course will take

¹⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, 'A Talk About Rules', in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 99-114 (p. 100).

three books to happen in.¹⁸

Sadly, such 'Rules' are the substance of much generic adult fantasy, and many readers will be able to name at least one or two authors whose works reflect them. These all-too-familiar elements became the substance of Jones's parodic work: *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, which provides a sharp-eyed overview of all the tired clichés.

The Tough Guide to Fantasyland illustrates clearly the one element that, as Linda Hutcheon argues, separates direct parody from other, more flexible varieties of intertextuality: its humour depends entirely on familiarity with the object of the parody; in other words, the reader must know the clichés of genre fantasy in order to appreciate fully the cleverness of the book. Laid out like an A-Z guidebook (the title is obviously a play on the 'Rough Guide' series of travel books), *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* provides a tongue-in-cheek encyclopaedia of everything an inexperienced tourist might encounter, or, to put a slightly more 'meta' spin on it, that people from this world might need to know if they found themselves whisked through a magic portal as characters in fantasy novels are wont to be. This metafictional aspect is enhanced by references to 'The Management' (the author, who creates and controls the world) and by the consideration of details such as how one newly arrived in fantasyland is expected to find money (there are, of course, no travellers' cheques). As Catherine Butler has noted, *The Tough Guide* is 'fundamentally the elaboration of a single conceit'.¹⁹ It does so extremely thoroughly; as Caroline Webb suggests, 'Jones brings to bear on the genre of popular heroic fantasy not only a sharp eye for stereotype, but a scepticism that interrogates both details such as the peculiarly sound-proof nature of Fantasyland tents and broader issues such as the nature of Fantasyland ecology'.²⁰ Anyone with a more than passing familiarity with popular fantasy will chuckle when reading that

¹⁸ Jones, 'Rules', p. 113.

¹⁹ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p. 239.

²⁰ Caroline Webb, *Fantasy and the Real World in British Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 66.

any POOL²¹ is likely to be numinous and that TEENAGE BOYS are usually big, thin and gangling, but will probably turn out to be a missing heir. Jones comments slyly on some of the sloppier aspects of some fantasy world-building: for example, ‘heraldry is rampant, passant and even couchant, but the exact rules are vague. Generally the Management is happy to paint an ANIMAL or plant of one colour on a field of another and leave it at that’.²² She points out that the existence of domestic ANIMALS can be proven only by deduction; there must be sheep and cattle because everyone wears wool or leather, but it is very unusual to see fields of farm animals — except HORSES — as one travels through fantasyland. Although HORSES are ubiquitous, they function like bicycles. They can be ridden all day without the horse tiring; they never shy or blow out their sides to make the girth slip.²³

The novel *Dark Lord of Derkholm* illuminates and deconstructs the same clichés of heroic fantasy as does *The Tough Guide to Fantasy* but does so in a much more interesting way. In effect, *Dark Lord* starts with the question of ‘what if’ the clichés were true, but the clichéd elements have been imposed upon a ‘real’ fantasy world by an external power that is treating the world as a kind of Disneyland, to which tourists from a mundane world can travel and have fantasy quest adventures. There is a dialogic relationship between *Derkholm* and *The Tough Guide*; in fact, the latter makes an appearance as the ‘black book’ filled with rules given to every tour operator. Mr. Chesney, the owner of the tour business, has gained power over the fantasy world because he has control of a demon who obeys his instructions. He runs several tours every year where the inhabitants are expected to play the roles of stock fantasy characters (wise old wizard, Dark Lord,

²¹ I follow Jones’s convention of putting cross-references to *The Tough Guide* entries in all caps.

²² Diana Wynne Jones, *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (London: Vista, 1996), p. 92.

²³ It is worth noting that the horses that feature quite prominently in *Cart and Cwiddler*, *The Pinhoe Egg*, and *The Crown of Dalemark* all behave precisely like real horses, albeit with, in one case, some magical prescience included.

and so on), and the tourists enact familiar episodes of fantasy quests. The people of the fantasy world are becoming increasingly fed up with the disruption to their way of life and the necessity of turning their entire economy over to the tours. In the course of the narrative, Jones not only illuminates the clichés of quest fantasy but goes deeper into the economic and social effects that such exploitation would have on the world, and the extent to which its inhabitants follow orders, albeit grudgingly, because of the money that Mr. Chesney pays them. Ultimately, the novel becomes in many ways an exploration of the relationship between a master and his slave or between a colony and its colonizer. As Caroline Webb has noted, ‘Jones is moving on from the simplicity of parody [in *Dark Lord of Derkholm*]. By representing the inhabitants of the reluctantly theme-parked world as having their own perspective on the tours, Jones engages with ethical concerns around exploitation of the exotic’.²⁴ Through the metafictional aspects of the works, Webb notes, ‘Jones implicitly accuses the consumers as well as the writers of heroic fantasy of accepting both clichéd writing and a dehumanized vision’.²⁵ Furthermore, Jones, through her representation of the imbalance of power implicit in such relationships, gives the reader tools to become aware of and perhaps escape from the lazy thinking that accompanies the uncritical acceptance of both tourist exploitation and overused fantasy tropes.

As Catherine Butler has commented, Jones travels a very fine line between the deconstruction of and the ‘straight’ use of the clichés of genre fantasy; for example, the wizard Derk tinkers with genetic experiments just as the entry on BAD WIZARDS claims that he should, although as Butler remarks, while Derk's tinkering qualifies him as a ‘BAD’ wizard, he is in fact benign and indeed instrumental in helping to bring an end to the rule of Mr. Chesney.²⁶ Often, though, issues raised in a parodic way in *The Tough Guide* are addressed and explained in *Dark Lord*. As mentioned above, the *Tough Guide* entry notes that ANIMALS are seldom seen; in *Dark Lord*, we discover that they've all been hidden carefully to

²⁴ Webb, *Fantasy and the Real World*, p. 67.

²⁵ Webb, *Fantasy and the Real World*, p. 72.

²⁶ Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, pp. 239-40.

escape the depredations of the tour groups. Just as horses are ubiquitous, so is STEW (as any reader of generic fantasy will know, stew is the staple food); in *Dark Lord* the stew in the pub is explained by the pub owner. His wife has run off to join the women's protest movement, and stew is the only dish he knows how to make.²⁷ Some of the easily parodied conventions of fantasy, such as the often silly conventions of naming, are shown to be the orders of 'The Management'; Derk realizes that the towns that 'The Management' calls Gna'as, Bil'umbra, and Slaz'in are what he knows as Greynash, Billingham and Sleane. The envoy tells Derk, 'We like to rename our places, Mr. Dark Lord, to give the right exotic touch'.²⁸

Although many stock characters and situations appear in the novel, fundamentally, Jones abandons many of the expected tropes of the 'quest' plot and indeed, underneath the humour, deals with many social and economic realities, allowing the characters and situations to comment not just on their own situations but on universal questions of power and human relationships. The titular 'Dark Lord' is the Wizard Derk, one who has been something of a rebel but who is appointed to the position of the Big Bad for this year's tour groups. His role in the novel, however, is not the individual Hero of the traditional quest narrative, as one might expect, but as the patriarch of a large and generally happy family, including two 'children' who are griffins, the product of his genetic experiments. His children and his wife, with whom his relationship is somewhat strained by the demands of the tours, all have their own character arcs, and ultimately matters are solved not by a HERO putting himself 'out there', as described in *The Tough Guide*, but through cooperation not just within the family but between other groups in their world, as we saw in *Power of Three* and *The Magicians of Caprona*.

Most importantly, the people of Derk's world have to wake up and stop cooperating with their own exploitation. Because of the tours, their own economy is at a standstill, and their freedom is suppressed in many serious ways; when Derk was at wizard school, all he wanted was to be helped to find out how to make his

²⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Dark Lord of Derkholm* (New York: Greenwillow, 1998), p. 231.

²⁸ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 30.

ideas work, but the wizards tried to force him to do things their way. Wizardry had to be directed towards the tours, with the result that no new discoveries or developments have been made for decades (this theme is expanded considerably in the sequel to *Dark Lord, Year of the Griffin*, as we shall see). When preparing for his role as Dark Lord, Derk is dreading having to go down to the village to break the news that Mr. Chesney wants the place in ruins. He gets there to discover the villagers have already done it. ‘Everyone in the world knows what to expect when the tours come through’ says the mayor.²⁹ Derk asks Old George if he minds being made to look emaciated and unhealthy. George replies it’s a stupid way to make a living, but ‘I’m not in charge, am I’.³⁰ Derk thinks to himself that he’s not either, but there’s nothing he could do about it. In a very pointed scene, Derk shows the Head of the Wizard School, Querida, some of his experiments with animals. He has a herd of ‘friendly cows’, who talk. He tells Querida that he bred them to be stupid so they wouldn’t know they were going to be eaten. Querida says that the people of their world are just like the friendly cows to Mr. Chesney.³¹

One of the species who is instrumental in helping Derk and the rest to get their freedom is the dragon, Scales, who wakes up after sleeping for many decades to find the world a different place. He complains that dragons are participating in ‘a ridiculous game’ and ‘all they would do was stare into the distance and pretend to be immeasurably wise’.³² Derk says he thought that was the dragon way: ‘I don’t hold with it’ [says the dragon] ‘No living creature has the right to claim wisdom. There is always more to find out’. When Derk says it must be a temptation to make people think you are wise, the dragon retorts, ‘It’s humbug [...] It’s also stupid. It stops you learning more’.³³ The griffin children are captured by convicts; when Scales rescues them, he tells them ‘I can’t help you unless you help yourself’.³⁴ The

²⁹ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 59.

³⁰ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 60.

³¹ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 38.

³² Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 135.

³³ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 136.

³⁴ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 157.

appearance of a deus ex machina at the end of the novel could be read as conventional, one of the elements parodied in *The Tough Guide*. The difference is that GODS are defined in *The Tough Guide* as pushy, intervening to make sure things go their way. In *Dark Lord*, Anscher, the god who appears at the climax of the novel, tells Derk, ‘The gods have been forced to wait [...] until people of this world asked to be able to rule their own affairs [...]. The gods need to be asked, and for forty years the people of this world found it easier to do what Roland Chesney told them than to ask for this world for themselves’. Significantly, he adds ‘Slaves have to learn freedom’.³⁵ Similarly, as readers (and perhaps writers) are shown the absurdity of many genre clichés they may learn to seek more original material or at least to recognize that rules are meant to be broken.

Learning not to be slaves: *Year of the Griffin*

If *Dark Lord of Derkholm* is in part a parodic deconstruction of the ‘rules’ of genre fantasy, in its sequel, *Year of the Griffin*, Jones points a critical finger at education systems. The novel opens with the University in shambles after the depredations of the Tours. It has been in service to Mr Chesney and his tours for forty years and effectively run to turn out ‘wizard guides’ for the tours. The professors pared down their teaching and taught only fast simple things that worked: ‘They left out half the theory and some of the laws, and they left out all the slower, more thorough, more permanent, or more artistic ways of doing things. Above all, they discouraged students from having new ideas’.³⁶

Derk’s griffin daughter is one of the new ‘first year’ group of students. When he visits her one day, he gives her and her friends advice, primarily that they need to remember that there are many ways of doing things. To that end, he gives them a reading list of works that will help broaden their outlook, works that the students discover are considered too difficult for first-year students and have to be

³⁵ Jones, *Dark Lord*, p. 341.

³⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Year of the Griffin* (New York, Greenwillow, 2000), p. 32.

requested in the library. Elda asks him, ‘Aren’t you being rather naughty?’ ‘Subversive is the word, Elda’, he responds.³⁷

When Elda and her friends read the ‘off list’ works, the result is a paradigm for the way Jones uses the tired tropes of fantasy, and a satirical commentary not only on the shallow and hide-bound demands of the publishing industry that she targets in the earlier book, but also perhaps, given the university setting here, on certain trends in our contemporary education system, where creativity can be discouraged or overlooked in the interests of practical skills training and the regurgitation of conventional orthodoxies. Elda reads Policant’s *Philosophy of Magic*: ‘Policant had a way of putting together two ideas that ought not to have had anything to do with one another, and then giving them a slight twist so that they did after all go together’.³⁸ In a very pointed sequence, we witness Corkoran, one of the tutors at the University, marking a set of essays from the first-years, written after the students had read these somewhat subversive works. In the first one, he finds that for every spell ‘there were possibilities the maker of the spell had never thought of’. Corkoran thinks ‘This was not modern magic. Magic these days confined itself to strictly practical things, to known facts and proven procedures’.³⁹ In a manner reminiscent of Jones’s own narrative techniques, another student, Claudia, starts with one spell and shows how it can be made to do two different things then continues until there are fifty new spells.

Corkoran supports the status quo: he ‘didn’t want any of his students going out into the world thinking they could work marvels’.⁴⁰ However, he does demonstrate some regret for the way the system works: young people come to the university with such bright hopes, ‘And by the end of three years most of them were simply competent magic users, scraping around to find employment that made them some money’.⁴¹ Corkoran tell his students ‘It’s no good expecting magic to

³⁷ Jones, *Griffin*, p. 34.

³⁸ Jones, *Griffin*, p. 51.

³⁹ Jones, *Griffin*, p. 99.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Griffin*, p. 103.

⁴¹ Jones, *Griffin*, p. 103.

perform wonders if these wonders are against the laws of nature', but Elda protests that magic is against the laws of nature, and Lukin argues that laws can be changed.⁴² However, as Helgard Fischer has argued, although the opposition that we see between describing and establishing laws and having ideas is a caricature of the scientific method, Jones's overall point is far more subtle and complex than simply 'old ways bad, new ways good'.⁴³ Fischer notes that, although the old system may have stifled creativity, an unthought-out 'creative' approach can be hazardous.

'People aren't just a set of rules': *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg*

Thus far, I have shown how social 'rules' can be enforced through narrative, whether this is intertextual expectations, stories of family history, or the 'rules' of genre. Once such rules have been established and allowed to remain unquestioned, Jones argues, a society can too easily be manipulated by an unscrupulous leader who plays on people's unconsidered prejudices and fears. The novels *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg* both depict a small community thoroughly under the sway — magical and mundane — of a forceful and selfish individual. In both cases, however, the community itself is implicated in its own enslavement, much as were the citizens of Wizard Derk's world. Historical practice, one arising from a perceived difference between the sexes, and the other from fear, has developed into a set of unexamined 'rules'; we also see in both novels the potentially coercive power of language that may only be countered by someone willing to allow the free use of the imagination.

Black Maria represents the harm that can be done when men and women are perceived as being like two separate species with their own interests and their own types of power. When her father is apparently killed in a car accident, narrator Mig, along with her mother and her brother, goes to live with her father's aunt-by-

⁴² Jones, *Griffin*, pp. 121-22.

⁴³ Helgard Fischer, 'The Structure of Magical Revolutions', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 21:2 (2010), 246-256 (p. 248).

marriage in the village of Cranbury.⁴⁴ The children discover that the village people are split down gender lines, the women holding the power in the household; the men are ‘allowed’ to rule the outdoors of hunting and fishing, but their power is confined in a mysterious green box. The women’s power is kept by ‘a few strong women who would work by the rules’. Aunt Maria, enforcing the ‘rules’ of behaviour, controls more than just her coven of thirteen ‘Mrs Urs’; she has power over most of the village, wielding social niceties and ‘sweet nothings’ as if they were rods of iron.

Probably everyone knows or has known someone like Aunt Maria. She is the kind of elderly woman who gives orders sweetly, saying things like ‘you must not call Mrs. So-and-so by her first name, dear; it’s not polite’ or ‘I’m sure you didn’t *mean* to forget to put milk in my tea, dear’, or ‘Surely you’re not going to go outside dressed like *that*, dear’. Aunt Maria can quite literally get away with murder, all the while appearing to be a dear little old lady and sounding sweet and reasonable. Add magic power to this mix, and it becomes the stuff of nightmares. When Mig stands face-to-face with her near the end of the novel, she writes,

I stared at Aunt Maria’s sweet rosy face [...]. Here were all these peculiar and awful things going on, and you know all about them and wanted to scream and yell and cry, and yet here was Aunt Maria, so gentle and cuddly and civilised that you couldn’t quite believe the awful things were happening [...]. As Aunt Maria began talking, I really began thinking something must be wrong with *me* for imagining she was wicked in the least.⁴⁵

Near the end of the novel, Anthony Green, who controls the male power of the green box but who has been imprisoned for years through the schemes of Aunt Maria and her daughter, explains the situation to Mig:

⁴⁴ Any similarity between the names Cranbury and Cranford is probably not coincidental.

⁴⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *Black Maria* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 151.

It goes back to the time when somebody here decided that men and women were different and that the rules for the ways they used the power should be different. [...] They divided into men's ways and women's ways then, and they've been thinking up more and more rules ever since to make the difference seem even bigger'.⁴⁶

Anthony goes on to tell Mig that the power in the box — power that elsewhere Jones explicitly equates with creativity — should by rights belong to everyone, not just to the men (or women) in the village. By shutting the power away, restricting it to only one group and limiting it with 'rules', the villagers have disadvantaged themselves. The implication is that readers, and by extension societies, must learn not to make the same mistake. Jones shows how Aunt Maria's 'rules', even without adding magic into the mix, help to keep women confined in their roles; for example, she insists on hanging washing outside instead of taking it to a laundrette and on only serving home-made cake at tea when guests are invited. Mig's mother is run ragged trying to conform to those 'rules' and is consequently distracted from the genuinely evil things that Aunt Maria is doing such as turning Mig's brother into a wolf.

It becomes clear that Mig's father was a man who accepted and lived by the 'rules'; Mig's mother tells her that he was fine as long as things went the way he expected them to but couldn't stand it if things broke the 'rules'; for example, he reacted coldly when Mig's mother fell down stairs when she was pregnant with Mig. She tells Mig: 'I should have left him then really [...] I did hope he'd learn - learn that people aren't just a set of rules, or at least learn that he *could* learn'.⁴⁷ Mig is grateful and then understands why Dad left them for Zenobia. 'Zenobia is the sort of girl who plays by the rules. Dad likes that. I bet she uses the rules just the way Aunt Maria does, to make him feel guilty and do things for her'.⁴⁸ However, Jones complicates matters somewhat by demonstrating the temptation there is to

⁴⁶ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 178.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 119.

⁴⁸ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 119

manipulate someone by using the rules. Mig finds herself getting round Mr. Phelps through flattery: 'I really don't like managing people by those rules. Still Mr. Phelps does go by those rules himself and perhaps he expected it'.⁴⁹ Dad, Mr. Phelps, and others in the village go along with the 'rules' because they have never thought to question them; like the people of Derk's world, they would have to learn not to be slaves, but it is not clear that they would all make that choice.

A similar division between the sexes can be found in *The Pinhoe Egg* but here the emphasis is less on gender and more on a form of 'othering' born through fear. The novel focusses on a large family, the Pinhoes, who are hereditary witches, living in villages on the outskirts of Chrestomanci castle. They are anxious to hide their magical ability from Chrestomanci because they are misusing it; gradually, however, we learn that in this case what could be described as a legitimate origin for some of the village 'rules' — fear of religious persecution in the distant past — has caused the villagers to resist change and to become susceptible to manipulation by one strong-willed individual. The Pinhoes' ancestors worked in harmony with nature and with the 'hidden folks' such as the Griffin (source of the titular egg), a unicorn, and the House Hob living in the walls of the Pinhoe ancestral home. The House Hob tells Marianne Pinhoe and Cat Chant how he has been kept prisoner since 'the devout folk' came: 'After that, the folks in charge here named me and all my kind wicked and ungodly, and they set spells to imprison us'.⁵⁰ In a climactic moment, Milly, Chrestomanci's wife, tells the villagers that in ancient times 'a new religion' came to the country and persecuted them, eventually killing all but the children. The survivors hid from their persecutors and grew up fearing natural magic and believing that they had to hide their magic abilities. Chrestomanci tells them 'I am afraid to say that the bloodthirsty doctrines of the religious ones rubbed off on them'.⁵¹

As in *Black Maria*, power is represented by one female figure and one male, the Gammer and Gaffer who are in charge of the village, although there is not so

⁴⁹ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 142.

⁵⁰ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Pinhoe Egg* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), p. 354.

⁵¹ Jones, *Pinhoe*, p. 418.

much emphasis on a division of power along gender lines. Once, the two leaders had been chosen for their gift of foresight, or ‘dwimmer’ ability — a kind of nature-based magic — but after the persecution, the villagers chose people who were good at giving orders, thus laying the groundwork for their own oppression. When, in the present day, Gaffer Pinhoe developed an interest in the old ways, Gammer, as manipulative as Aunt Maria without the latter’s sweet reasonableness, had him shut away behind a magical barrier to prevent him from spreading his ideas. At one point, Chrestomanci, too, is imprisoned behind the barrier, and Cat Chant, who is developing ‘dwimmer’ ability himself, searches for him and discovers that being left-handed gives him an advantage. ‘That barrier felt as if it had been constructed by right-handed people who had been - rather long ago - very set in their ways. He could take them by surprise if he was clever’.⁵²

As we saw in Derk’s world, and with some of the residents of Cranbury, many of the Pinhoes cooperate in their own subjection. Gammer Pinhoe has ruled her family with an iron fist, insisting that everyone does what she tells them rather than following their own natural inclinations, magical or otherwise. Martha Hixon points out that although the natural respect the family has for Gammer is corrupted by her manipulation, they ‘find excuses for her actions rather than face the reality that she is a mean-spirited old woman who has little concern for the welfare of others’.⁵³ Ultimately, what keeps them all under control is unthinking obedience and a fear of ‘the other’; once again, Jones is showing her readers the importance of thinking things through. Interestingly, in this case, the Pinhoes have forgotten ‘the old ways’ that allowed them to be freer and more creative. It is not a blanket message of ‘new ways better’, but one that suggests we should be flexible, broad-minded, and cooperative rather than narrow and exclusionist. Both *Aunt Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg* clearly demonstrate how one strong-willed individual can take dangerous advantage of those who do not think for themselves.

⁵² Jones, *Pinhoe*, p. 183

⁵³ Martha Hixon, ‘Power Plays: Paradigms of Power in *The Pinhoe Egg* and *The Merlin Conspiracy*’, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21:2 (2010), 169-186 (p. 172).

Conclusion: Magic and Manipulation

A feature of both *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg* is the representation of coercive magic expressed performatively through speech. As I have noted elsewhere,⁵⁴ Jones's emphasis on the power of language throughout her work often focusses on performative speech, such as Sophie Hatter speaking life into things in *Howl's Moving Castle*. In both *Black Maria* and *The Pinhoe Egg*, such speech becomes coercive, promoting the power imbalance between children and their parents or other elders. We sense Mig's frustration and helplessness in the face of Aunt Maria's extremely effective passive aggression, and it is not always easy to tell, as Catherine Butler has also noted, whether the power being exerted is supernatural, the force of strong personality, or the natural obedience of children to their elders. When adults in *The Pinhoe Egg* tell Cat and Marianne to run along, they do so, without thinking. When Cat tells Marianne that Gammer Pinhoe has kept her 'dark and dusty', to some extent denying her powers, and adds that Marianne is almost an enchanter but that she doesn't trust her own powers, Marianne replies: 'I think you're right. It's hard to - to trust yourself when everyone's always telling you you're too young and to do what you're told'.⁵⁵ Later, when Chrestomanci goes missing, and Cat believes he can help find him, everyone tells Cat to run along, and he wonders if he should insist. 'No, if he insisted or even asked, someone would forbid him to try'.⁵⁶

This brings us back to the question I raised at the beginning of the chapter, the notion of the perceived power imbalance between an author of children's books and her reader, particularly when, as I have argued, the author in question uses such things as mythic resonance and the weight of literary tradition intertextually

⁵⁴ Debbie Gascoyne, "Why don't you be a tiger?" The Performative, Transformative, and Creative Power of the Word in the Universes of Diana Wynne Jones', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21:2 (2010), 210-220.

⁵⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Pinhoe Egg* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), pp. 166-7.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Pinhoe*, p. 181.

to enhance the power of her own writing. To what extent can this be different from Aunt Maria or even the benign Chrestomanci? Aunt Maria tells Mig how her power works:

The main spell is just talk, and that's quite easy, but of course you are working away underneath the talk, putting all sorts of things into people's minds and tying their thoughts into the right shape.⁵⁷

In 'The Heroic Ideal', when Jones describes using Eliot's *Four Quartets* as an underlay to *Fire and Hemlock*, she uses terms that are not dissimilar, suggesting that in certain points in the novel she 'turned the sound up' to bring what had been a kind of background to the fore: 'Though I was always aware of Eliot's poem as an overlay, I only, as it were, turned the sound up on it from time to time. I kept it low until the Bristol section after this initial *forte* where Polly [...] is turned out, lost and looking down into the River Avon'.⁵⁸ The subsequent quote from Eliot makes it clear that Jones intends us to realize that Polly might be contemplating suicide at that point. Is Jones using the power of suggestion to manipulate or coerce her audience? What I hope is clear from repeated emphasis on creativity and the power of the imagination throughout this thesis, is that I believe there is an enormous difference between Aunt Maria's selfish and — yes — evil manipulation of others, and Jones's own use of language.

First of all, as we have seen repeatedly, characters come to grief as a result of thoughtless or passive acceptance of what they see, read or have been told. Over and over, characters are taught to question accepted models and to be active participants in constructing their own destinies. In the scene immediately before the example cited above from *Black Maria*, Mig is only caught by Aunt Maria and her followers because she herself is not paying attention. After freeing Anthony Green, Mig creeps back to Aunt Maria's house 'feeling very pleased' with herself.

⁵⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Black Maria* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 183.

⁵⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey', in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp. 79-98 (p. 95).

She doesn't think it odd that the dining room is deserted when it ought to have been full of Aunt Maria and the Mrs. Urs. In her bedroom, she finds the journal that she has returned to look for lying on the bedroom table when it ought to have been hidden under her bed: she says 'Somehow that didn't worry me at all'. Then she feels compelled to start writing 'but I never seemed to notice it was stupid to sit and write about it in Aunt Maria's house'.⁵⁹

Similarly, Tonino Montana and Angelica Petrocci are captured by the evil witch in *The Magicians of Caprona* when they are both sent books — Tonino's is called *The Boy Who Saved His Country* — and are so captivated by the 'Boys Own Paper' clichés of the book that they don't realize how ridiculous the plots are. Tonino is annoyed with himself when he realizes how he has been trapped: '[he] knew things never happened the way they did in books'.⁶⁰ As in this example, and as noted throughout this thesis, a high proportion of Jones's works is overtly metafictional; Robyn McCallum notes that underlying much metafiction for children is a heightened sense of the status of fiction as an elaborate form of play.⁶¹ Elsewhere, McCallum asserts that 'Texts which use dialogic narrative structures and techniques [...] generally construct more active reading positions'. These techniques, she argues, can equip readers with strategies for finding meaning not just in texts but in the world, and 'facilitate a questioning of conventional notions of selfhood, meaning and history'.⁶² Geoff Moss argues that metafiction 'turns the reader into a self-conscious collaborator rather than an easily manipulated

⁵⁹ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 180.

⁶⁰ Jones, *Magicians*, p. 112.

⁶¹ Robyn McCallum, 'Very Advanced Texts: Metafictions and Experimental Work', in *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, Ed. Peter Hunt (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.138-50 (p. 140).

⁶² Robyn McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction, The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (London: Garland, 1999), p. 259.

consumer'.⁶³ Jones writes that reading should be an experience. The metafictional aspects of her books add to that experience. Linda Hutcheon notes, in *Narcissistic Narrative*, that 'The act of reading becomes a creative, interpretative one that partakes of the experience of writing itself. These fictions are about their own processes, as experienced and created by the reader's responses'. The reading of metafictional texts, she writes, 'is often a rereading, a necessary constructing of meaning and system in the mind of the reader. The work is both an object and a performance'.⁶⁴

Throughout Jones's work is an emphasis on thought and imagination. The way Jones uses intertextuality, whether through direct parody or more subtle references, stimulates thought and enhances the experience of reading. 'Thought' Jones writes, 'is something no one can see, but it initiates more action', and she continues that an experience is 'an action *combined with* the thoughts and sensations of the person performing it'.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, she highlights the importance of exercising the imagination: 'People "play with ideas" in order to get them sorted out, and when the solution comes, it is often accompanied with wonder and delight'.⁶⁶ Later, she outlines the possibilities offered when a writer exercises her imagination:

Very early on it [a good children's book] will say "what if?" and proceed with enjoyment and wonder to run through the possibilities resulting from that. It may go to surprising lengths here, and there will be things half heard

⁶³ Geoff Moss, 'Metafiction and the Poetics of Children's Literature', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 15:2 (Summer 1990), 50-52 (p. 51).

⁶⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier U. Press, 1980), p. 144.

⁶⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, 'Creating the Experience', in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp.51-55 (p. 54).

⁶⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, 'Writing for Children: A Matter of Responsibility', in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 72-78 (p. 70).

and only hinted at, possibly, as people's minds have the built-in tendency to respond with excitement to mystery.

She also suggests that fairy stories are 'practically perfect examples of narratives that fit the pattern of the mind at work'.⁶⁷

Of course, it can be argued that Jones's techniques may go over the heads of some of her readers. Linda Hutcheon raises the important question of what happens to the act of decoding parody if the reader 'misreads' the intention. She asks: 'Can the producer of parody today assume enough of a cultural background on the part of the audience to make parody anything but a limited or, as some would say, elitist literary genre today?'.⁶⁸ This question is, of course, more important when the audience is made up of children. Part of the answer lies, Hutcheon argues, in where the balance of power lies: 'Who is in control of whom?' she asks. 'Is the author an elitist figure demanding a sophisticated reader? Or is the inferring reader ultimately the one with the power, the power to ignore or misread the intentions of the parodist?' However, she argues, the reader is no more constrained by the overt tactics used in parody than by more covert manipulation. Indeed, 'the best way to demystify power is to reveal it in all its arbitrariness'.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Jones, 'Writing for Children', p. 77.

⁶⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (Urbana and Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 88.

⁶⁹ Hutcheon, *Parody*, p. 89.

Chapter Four: ‘Polyphonic Assistants’: Reading and Misreading

Introduction

My first two substantive chapters have focussed on the notion that truth can have many shapes. Indeed, perhaps the one ‘truth’ that runs throughout Diana Wynne Jones’s work is that adherence to any single doctrine or way of doing things is a mistake. This applies not only to power structures and belief systems but also to our own faith in the truth of our own experiences. Characters gain power in Jones’s world through self-discovery, often through the discovery that the ‘truth’ of their identity is not what they originally believed. Characters — and readers — have to learn to ‘read’ both themselves and their situations; reading stories can be effective training for ‘real life’. As I have shown, intertextuality as Jones uses it is not a fixed one-to-one equivalency. A particular reading can have multiple possible interpretations, any or even all of which can be valid. Failure to recognize the possibility of multiple interpretations or diverse points of view results in worse than misreading; some of the worst villains in Jones’s work are those who impose a kind of mental stagnation on their victims, and often characters fall victim to villainy through a failure to think for themselves.

Each of the chapters that follow will examine aspects of another central tenet of Jones’s work, particularly for the purposes of this thesis: a kind of double-vision, a sense that some of the critical or conceptual binaries that we may live by are far less rigid than we think. In my general introduction, I discussed what I believe to be a false critical dichotomy between metaphor and metonymy, especially in the way these terms are applied to realism and fantasy respectively. Jones’s work argues for a world in which reading and exercising the imagination open up the possibility of accessing a world of enchantment. Dualities run through Jones’s work: the ‘two gardens’ of her childhood, that I will discuss more fully in a later chapter, the rippling glass in a window that provides a glimpse to the land of ‘Bristolia’ that lies behind Bristol; the ‘nowhere/here now’ urn in *Fire and Hemlock*, and of course the title *Fire and Hemlock*. What one sees and reads can

have a literal interpretation, or it can lead down other paths, often prompted by intertextual references. Most of all, Jones's work argues for and offers possibility.

This chapter will examine the way Jones uses word play and point of view to demonstrate the importance of this kind of 'double' way of reading the world and the centrality of the creative imagination. First, I explore examples in which Jones shows her characters undergoing a process of reading and interpretation that echoes that of her readers. Next, I will demonstrate the way she uses point of view and the technique of defamiliarization, again to offer alternate ways of interpreting the world. Finally, I will examine in depth the novella 'The True State of Affairs', where reading, interpretation and mis-reading are central to the plot. In that work, the narrator's failure to see beyond a literal interpretation of her experiences brings her to grief.

Word Games

In Jones's worlds, the literal becomes metaphorical and the metaphorical becomes literal, often through word play. For example, the 'castles in the air' spun by dreamers and story-tellers manifest in the novel of that title as a castle that magically rests in the clouds. The genie who occupies the castle hints to the characters searching for it that an important secret is 'right under your nose'; the secret is contained in the genie's nose-ring. When, in *The Merlin Conspiracy*, Roddy's Welsh grandfather asks her if she's never heard of the red dragon and the white, she responds 'But that's just a way of saying the Welsh and the English fought one another'. He looks at her with an expression of the utmost scorn.¹ The novel *Archer's Goon* has as a preface an Author's Note containing ten 'facts' - many of them variations of popular sayings or clichés - such as 'All power corrupts, but we need electricity,' 'Music does not always soothe the troubled breast,' and 'Space is the final frontier, and so is the sewage farm'. All of them can be seen to be enacted in the course of the novel. Perhaps the most important, not only in that

¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Merlin Conspiracy* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 81.

novel, but for Jones's work in general, is the last: 'It pays to increase your word power'.

One example of Jones's exuberant and creative representation of reading and language can be found in an early work, *The Ogre Downstairs*. This book tells the story of a 'blended' family: a single mother with two sons and a daughter who marries a man with two sons, who all move in together. Neither set of children is happy with the arrangement, particularly when the stepfather turns out to be somewhat bad-tempered and difficult, enough to earn him the label 'The Ogre'. The oldest boys from each family get into a fight, and in order to try to make peace, the Ogre gives them each what seems to be a chemistry set. However, the potions in the set turn out not to be 'real' chemicals but substances with magical properties: *vol pulv* gives the power of flight, 'animal spirits,' bring inanimate objects to life, and so on. Gradually, after many misadventures as a consequence of experiments with these substances, the children become friends, and ultimately even the Ogre seems to become more human.

Susan Stewart, who theorizes nonsense as a form of intertextuality, refers to a 'surplus of signification' that shifts the boundaries of discourse to include the sound of reading. This is where the information on the page is presented in such a way as to hide the aural content: what looks like gibberish on the page is shown to be English when read out loud.² Towards the end of *The Ogre Downstairs*, one of the boys breaks the vial called *dens drac.* on the driveway. Knowledge of Latin would give the clue that these were 'dragon's teeth,' and knowledge of mythology, specifically the story of Jason and the Argonauts, might provide a clue as to what will happen next. As the children watch, what appear to be mushrooms appear on the drive, and the mushrooms are then revealed to be crash-helmets with angry, belligerent faces under them. When the motorcycle gang members emerge from the driveway, they start speaking words written in Greek characters, rather in the way that in cartoons swear words are represented by a string of nonsense letters. If one

² Susan Stewart, *Nonsense. Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 98-99.

reads the Greek words, they turn out to be English phrases written in Greek alphabet, carefully split up and cleverly embellished to look like ‘real’ Greek. In fact, when the Greek words are read phonetically, the result is ‘These kids tried to thump me, fellows!’ ‘Let me at him!’ and so on. The joke is that the English children, ‘hearing’ the Greek, don’t understand, because it is supposed to be Greek, which of course it is not. Admittedly, there’s a very small group of adult readers, let alone children, who will ‘get’ the joke, but my aim here is to point out the uniquely *writerly* aspect of it; it would be, for example, impossible to replicate in an audio-version of the book.

Indeed, Jones’s texts are what Roland Barthes called *writerly* texts. The concept of a writerly text can be aligned with that of Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony or dialogism; the binary of the monophonic versus polyphonic, or readerly versus writerly text, parallels that of the literal versus the metaphoric, the metaphoric versus the metonymic. The monologic, or readerly text is the ‘classic’ text, the one where there might be no pleasure in further reading because all questions have been answered. The writerly text is allusive, elusive, open-ended, multi-vocal and often metafictional. The goal of ‘literary work,’ writes Barthes, ‘(of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text’.³ ‘The writerly text,’ writes Barthes, ‘is *ourselves* writing’.⁴ The writerly text, according to Barthes, is one where there is potentially endless deferral of meaning; reading the text represents Derrida’s concept of *différance*. While Jones is very much in control of her work and its system of meanings, in which respect she is ‘readerly’ as Barthes defines it, part of her strategy may be to illustrate the flexibility of language and the importance of context for meaning. On the one hand, there is a pattern and an order. Meaning may be plural, but it also makes sense. On the other hand, what is important, Jones demonstrates, is to allow the symbolic or the abstract in meaning as well as the literal. Readers who insist on the literal will be led astray, in the same way that narrowing the identification of an intertextual

³ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 4.

⁴ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 5.

reference to one possible interpretation limits the possibility of a reading.

This is illustrated clearly in the novel *A Tale of Time City*, where a scene in which one main character translates ‘universal symbols’ becomes a lesson in semiotics. Time City has become unstable, and Vivian, along with the two boys who ‘kidnapped’ her from her own world, are searching for four caskets, possession of which will, if legends are true, help them to restore it. They have a tutor, Dr. Wilander, who, it will turn out, is himself an aspect of the founder of the city, Faber John. He has given them some scrolls to read that the children will discover contain clues to their search.

The scrolls are written in ‘Universal Symbols,’ and Vivian finds translating them to be a more difficult task that she had hoped:

Universal Symbols did not exactly stand for letters, nor for whole words either. You had to fit the things the Symbols *might* stand for together, and then try to make sense of them.⁵

Her first attempt reads as follows:

One large black smith threw four coffins about [...]. So that they turned into four very old women [...]. One went rusty for smoothing clothes. Two went white in moderately cheap jewelry. Three of them turned yellow and got expensive and another four were dense and low in the tables.⁶

Dr. Wilander remarks drily that ‘People don’t usually write nonsense,’ and we learn that ‘One large black smith threw four coffins about’ means ‘The Great Faber John made four containers or caskets’. We can see that Vivian has mistaken the possible meanings of ‘iron’: it can be a metal, but also an object for smoothing clothes. The element lead is in fact dense and has a low number in the periodic tables. Vivian, and we, have to look at things in different ways in order for the true

⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *A Tale of Time City* (London: Harper Collins, 2000) p. 164.

⁶ Jones, *Time City*, p. 164.

pattern to emerge.

Another example of the way that Jones plays with the notions of literal and metaphorical meanings can be found through her use of an intertext – the poem ‘Song,’ by John Donne – which is used prominently in the novel *Howl’s Moving Castle*. Michael, Howl’s apprentice, is struggling with a ‘spell’ that he thinks Howl has left him to make. The spell is the first stanza of Donne’s poem ‘Song’:

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
 Tell me where all the past years are,
 Or who cleft the Devil’s foot.
 Teach me to hear the mermaids singing,
 Or to keep off envy’s stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.

Written below it are the words ‘Decide what this is about [and] Write a second verse yourself’. We learn later that this poem was given as homework to Howl’s real-life nephew in Wales, in our own world. The teacher who set the homework, a ‘Miss Angorian,’ turns out to be the demonic familiar to Howl’s enemy the Witch of the Waste. This is not the spell Michael thinks it is; it is in fact intended by Miss Angorian to be a curse that will bring Howl under the Witch’s power.

Sophie and Michael struggle to interpret the spell in ways that echo amusingly the trials of a student attempting to understand the poem. Michael tries to turn the elements of the poem into actual ingredients for the spell: ‘I used soot with sparks in it for the falling star, and a seashell for the mermaids singing’ and so on; ‘and could the thing that stops stinging be dock leaf? I hadn’t thought of that before - anyway, none of it *works!*’

Sophie’s response to this is that she is not surprised: ‘It looks to me like a set

of impossible things to do'.⁷ The joke is that, of course, in Donne's poem, that is precisely what they are: expressing the 'impossibility' of the speaker finding a woman 'good and true'. Sophie then makes her own notes, a page of which reads:

Does garlic keep off envy? I could cut a star out of paper and drop it. Could we tell it to Howl? Howl would like mermaids better than Calcifer. Do not think Howl's mind honest. Is Calcifer's? Where *are* past years anyway? Does it mean one of those dry roots must bear fruit? Plant it? Next to dock leaf? In seashell? Cloven hoof, most things but horses. Shoe a horse with a clove of garlic? Wind? Smell? Wind of seven-league boots? Is Howl devil? Cloven toes in seven-league boots? Mermaids in boots?⁸

In an amusing footnote to this episode, when Sophie and Michael travel to Wales with Howl to track down the original of the homework exercise, one of the boys whose homework it was tells them 'I remember "wind" and "finned". It's about submarines'. Sophie and Michael 'blinked at this new theory, wondering how they had missed it'.⁹

Despite all this misreading, Sophie and Michael begin to realize that the spell can be interpreted literally when they go hunting in earnest for a falling star on the Witch's waste and meet one. Eventually the reader learns along with them that Calcifer the fire demon, Howl's familiar, was one such star, and indeed each of the elements of the 'spell' begins to come true. The irony is that, as mentioned above, the poem is a set of impossible things to demonstrate how one cannot find true love. Through the unfolding of the elements of the spell – Donne's poem – presented literally, Howl and Sophie fall in love, so that the so-called 'impossible' conditions are fulfilled.

Jones uses another poem in a similar way in the novel *Deep Secret*, in which the workings of a spell are revealed through several verses of the nursery rhyme

⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Howl's Moving Castle* (New York: Greenwillow, 1986) p. 87.

⁸ Jones, *HMC*, p. 87.

⁹ Jones, *HMC*, p. 103.

‘How Many Miles to Babylon?’. In the multiverse in which *Deep Secret* is set, magic is real, but in worlds, such as our own, where people do not believe in it, it is less accessible. A group of powerful individuals called Magids are responsible for helping to ‘nudge’ our world more towards magic. The more stories there are about magic, we discover, the more true magic becomes. Rupert Venables, one of the Magids, tells us ‘No one has ever told me, but I have always suspected that [Lewis] Carroll was a Magid. It is a very influential thing to do, to write books like the *Alice* books, and influence is what being a Magid is all about. Subtle influence’.¹⁰ We learn that one of the ways the Magid’s plant information — the ‘deep secrets’ of the title — is through nursery rhymes or other writings that people think is nonsense. Farah Mendlesohn notes of this that Jones demonstrates ‘there is power in story and that play-oriented activities are a route to deeper learning’.¹¹ The truth is there under the surface if the reader is prepared to find it.

Defamiliarization and Point of View

All these word games provide another way of looking at the world: creatively. Jones writes ‘If you treat a thing as funny the way children do, you have a ready-made bridge to fantasy. Kids tell dreadful punning jokes, every one a pocket fantasy: *Q. What lies on the seabed and shivers? A. A nervous wreck*’.¹² Through word games and unusual points of view, Jones employs defamiliarization, a concept that Catherine Butler equates with the discourse of power and personal autonomy. Butler writes,

seeing the world from an unfamiliar perspective, her characters [and I would add readers] are not just given a new epistemological tool with

¹⁰ Diana Wynne Jones, *Deep Secret* (New York: Tor, 1997), p. 30.

¹¹ Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 171.

¹² Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Creating the Experience,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp.51-55 (p. 53).

which to view themselves and those around them; they are provided with the means to question prescribed norms of knowledge and behaviour, and to resist those who would impose such norms for their own ends'.¹³

As shown in the previous chapter, defamiliarization does not apply only to objects in our world but also to myths, stories and literary sources.

One novel where Jones uses the technique of defamiliarization to great effect is *Power of Three*, which begins as what seems to be an otherworld fantasy with fairy-tale underpinnings, in which three apparently different races are at odds but gradually revealed to be more closely linked than they had assumed. The book's thematic concerns seem simple — we should not accept without question the prejudices we are taught — but the representation is sophisticated, and I believe that Jones is asking us to re-examine our expectations of genre at the same time as our social prejudices. As I've argued in the last chapter, Jones upsets the expectations that she herself creates by assigning the role of the focalizing character to only one of the groups, by the fairy-tale-like setting and tone, and by the initial premise of the story. We discover, along with Gair, the main focalizing character, that things are far from what they seem.

Someone from outside our world could see the technology we take for granted as something magical; Jones invites her readers to see even the mundane as something strange or even enchanted. In one episode of *Howl's Moving Castle*, Howl takes Sophie and Michael to his home country (and world) of Wales. 'Michael's jacket had become a waist-length padded thing. He lifted his foot, with a canvas shoe on it, and stared at the tight blue things encasing his legs. "I can hardly bend my knee"', he complains.¹⁴ In this way, jeans, trainers and a down waistcoat become something strange and exotic. In Howl's sister's house, two boys are playing with a computer, which Sophie sees as a 'magic box [...] like the one

¹³ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies Of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006) p. 238.

¹⁴ Jones, *HMC*, p. 100.

downstairs [a television], but it seemed to be showing writing and diagrams more than pictures'.¹⁵ It is worth noting, however, that this last detail demonstrates one potential pitfall of such metaphoric description, that it, like William Gibson's famous line about the sky looking like a television screen tuned to a dead channel, can become dated and thus lose its immediate power. Children today might not recognize the kind of text-based computer game that the children in this scene are playing.

This quibble aside, however, we can see a similar technique in *Power of Three*, when the 'giants,' Brenda and Gerald, take Gair and his brother and sister home with them. There, they encounter 'magic fastenings called zips' and they are given 'strips of fried salt meat' (bacon) to eat. 'It was [Ceri] who discovered the thing Gerald called the loo, for which they were all grateful and which amused them considerably'.¹⁶ Brenda thinks Gair can work magic. Gair says 'It was words, and words are quite ordinary. Magic is things like your talking boxes and the box that cooks without fire'.

"Those aren't magic. They're science," said Brenda.

"And electricity," added Gerald.

There was silence, as each side discovered it did not understand the other.¹⁷

Jones allows, even requires, readers to undertake a journey of discovery along with her characters. As mentioned, many times Jones's characters find out that they are someone altogether different from what they initially believed. This may be something as simple, and fairly traditional, as in Gair learning that he has special powers when he thought he was ordinary. Sophie, in *Howl's Moving Castle*, only discovers her own powers when she is turned into an old woman. Jones reveals truths about our own world by showing us it at one remove.

One of the most extraordinary experiments in point of view occurs in *The Time of the Ghost*. The viewpoint character is identified only as 'she'. The novel opens "'There's been an accident'" she thought "'Something's wrong!'" She

¹⁵ Jones, *HMC*, p. 102.

¹⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, *Power of Three*, London: Beaver, 1989, p. 135.

¹⁷ Jones, *Power of Three*, p. 137.

discovers that she seems to be made of thoughts, panicky thoughts. She is an invisible shape, unable at first to make herself heard or understood. Gradually, she remembers that she is one of four sisters, but she is not able to work out which one she is. At the beginning of the book, as she watches her sisters interact, she, and we along with her, assume that she is contemporary with them, that the viewpoint character is a child. It is not immediately clear that the ‘ghost’ is in fact a young adult and that she is travelling in time, back to revisit events that set in motion the crisis that has so terrified her. The later discovery has a retrospective effect on the ‘reading’ of events for us as well, similar to the complicated time loops in *Hexwood*.

Again, as readers we share in the discoveries as she reads and misreads her own situation. She sees herself in the hospital bed: ‘It was a thing swathed in bandages like a rotting mummy. It had a curious head, something like a dog’s head without ears’,¹⁸ and indeed she realizes that what she is looking at is a foot. When in her ghost shape, she does not remember at first that ‘Himself,’ the headmaster of the school she finds herself floating through, is her father. Along with the ghost, we gradually discover which one of the sisters she is, but Jones allows the identification to shift so that, along with the ghost we are never sure. First, she names herself as Sally, then she is confused by overhearing a conversation between a hospital nurse and one of her sisters: the nurse asks ‘what was the name again?’ and the sister answers ‘Sally’, actually naming the patient rather than herself. When the nurse repeats the mistake at the bedside, announcing ‘here’s your sister Sally to see you’, the visiting sister, in truth Imogen, is too upset to correct it. Thenceforth the ghost – thinking she can’t be Sally – refers to herself as ‘the patient’ until she learns that she is, after all, Sally. Readers share in the confusion until it is possible to reinterpret the scene in retrospect.

This novel is the closest Jones ever comes to the horror genre, except perhaps in one or two of her short stories. There is a surreal, nightmarish quality to the tightly controlled point of view of the ‘ghost’, along with that horrible sense of helplessness of being unable to communicate. She needs to warn her sisters but is unable to. It is also yet another example of the very thin line Jones draws between

¹⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Time of the Ghost* (London: Beaver Books, 1984) p. 93.

realism and fantasy. Sally's experiences could simply be hallucinations, brought about from the trauma of the car crash she has been in. The evil influence of the 'Monigan' spirit that the girls seem to have raised could be explained in psychological terms. The 'ghost' seems to travel in time, or does she?

Archer's Goon is another exercise in defamiliarization, this time through the use of an unreliable viewpoint character: unreliable because he is caught in a time-loop that has erased his memories of having lived before. The protagonist, Howard, is an adopted son. His parents are Quentin Sykes, a writer who also teaches at the local polytechnic, and Catriona, a musician, who organizes music in schools. In a wonderful riff on the notion of 'creative currency', Howard's father pays taxes to the city in the form of 'two thousand': not pounds but words, every three months. The words are overdue, and the titular 'goon' is a gigantic personage sent by the mysterious Archer to collect. It is worth noting here that the inspiration for the 'goon' was a play on a personal pun Jones made between 'urban guerilla' and 'gorilla'.¹⁹ As the novel unfolds, we learn that the city is under the control of seven godlike people: Archer, Venturus, Dilian, Torquil, Erskine, Hathaway, and Shine. Each of them 'farms' different aspects of the city; Archer farms power, Dilian farms law and order, and so on. It turns out that Quentin's quarterly words have been lost, and Quentin steadfastly refuses to rewrite them, with chaotic consequences. Ultimately, we discover that Archer has been using the words in an attempt to gain more power over his siblings, and in the course of efforts to get Quentin to hand over his words we meet all but one of the siblings: Venturus, who turns out to be Howard himself. Suzanne Rahn notes that we don't suspect Howard is Venturus because he is the focalizing character, and readers identify with him.²⁰ Indeed, John Stephens has suggested that we may to some extent be doing children a disservice by encouraging them to identify with a focalizer. 'Reading', he states, 'establishes a relationship between the reader and a potential alter ego, the

¹⁹ Diana Wynne Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp. 79-98 (p.89).

²⁰ Suzanne Rahn, *Rediscoveries in Children's Literature* (London: Garland, 1995) p. 167.

focalizer(s), but also a relationship between the reader and the reader's own selfhood'. He adds 'Distancing strategies, on the other hand, encourage the constitution of a reading self in relation to the other constituted in and by the text'.²¹

When Roland Barthes talks about 'writerly' texts, in which the reader participates in the process of writing the text, he emphasizes the creative power of the reader. Linda Hutcheon refers to contemporary metafiction as a mimesis of the process of writing, but acknowledges that we need also to include the reader in the equation and that we need to bring new theoretical formulations to respond to new literary forms; she writes 'Reader aesthetics has been one reply to the needs of modern metafiction'.²² I believe that metafiction can also be a mimesis of the process of reading, and that Jones's work demonstrates that repeatedly. Jones writes that she wants her work to give readers an *experience*, and her work gives readers tools not just to navigate the world around them but to explore the creative possibilities in their own imaginations. Metafiction can be as much about reading as it is about writing; interpretation, as any good post-structuralist will affirm, is contingent, a three-way operation between author, text, and reader. Lack of context, whether through a character's physical displacement or through defamiliarization, can result in a failure, on the part of a character in the novel, or indeed the reader, to 'see' that there can be more than one possible interpretation, or way to 'read' a situation. The most successful readers learn to see and to navigate both worlds: the 'real' and the metaphoric, or the abstract; in fact, I believe that Jones shows us that this is a necessity.

²¹ John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (Harlow, Essex: Addison Wesley Longman, 1992), p. 69.

²² Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier U. Press, 1980) p. 47.

A Tragedy of Mis-Reading: ‘The True State of Affairs’

Never is that point made more clearly than in the strange, rather bleak, novella ‘The True State of Affairs’, which is a model of the one-sided interpretive act and demonstrates its dangers. The narrative draws the reader into the process as we try to piece together who the narrator is, where she comes from, and whether she is correct in her assumptions about what is going on.

‘The True State of Affairs’ is almost incidentally a fantasy: it opens with the main character, Emily, a prisoner of one of the feuding lords of Dalemark, the setting of Jones’s later *Dalemark Quartet*, and as her narrative unfolds it becomes clear that she was abruptly transported to Dalemark from her own world, which appears to be ours. Farah Mendlesohn writes quite fully about the way Jones subverts the ‘portal’ quest fantasy in this story as well as others. The portal is unexplained; most of the action happens off-stage, and Emily the narrator, who has been transported to the fantasy world of Dalemark, is not involved in it, not even ‘on that map of Fantasyland that structures the quest’ as Mendlesohn so aptly puts it.²³ According to the conventions of the genre, the reader would expect her to become engaged in some quest, even to be instrumental in saving the world, but she is not. However, the fantasy setting is necessary to provide that sense of displacement that brings to the fore Emily’s complete disorientation. She ‘reads’ certain signals in the context of her own background but has no touchstones from the world in which she finds herself to anchor the ‘truth’ for herself. More importantly, it is a prison narrative; the narrator’s imprisoned state and limited vision are paradigmatic of a reader forced to interpret a ‘text’ - the limited signs provided for her - without a context that she fully understands.

The creative origin of the story is what appears to be something of a mis-reading on Jones’s own part. In the introduction written for a reprinting of the story in the collection *Minor Arcana*, she describes once reading *The Kingis Quair*, a true story in the form of a poem by James I of Scotland who, when imprisoned by the English, fell in ‘courtly love’ with a girl he saw in the distance. Jones writes ‘Of

²³ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 100.

course it all stopped when he was released',²⁴ and that it occurred to her to wonder what the girl felt about it. In the original poem, we are only ever given a brief glimpse of the love interest, and contrary to Jones's claim, it does not 'all stop' when James was released; he is reunited with his love and he credits her with giving him the strength to survive his misfortune. In real life, James's imprisonment ended with his marriage to Joan Beaufort, whom most critics (including C.S. Lewis) identify as the object of the king's courtly love.²⁵

The narrator's name is Emily. It is probably not a coincidence that Emily is the name of the object of courtly love in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale," which, like *The Kingis Quair*, owes much to Boethius. All we know about Emily is that she comes from Kent, that her parents are both dead, and that she was once a teacher but gave it up because she didn't like the emotional demands children made on her.²⁶ She is a somewhat vain woman, overly confident in her own ability to judge character. Somehow, she finds herself transported from Kent in the twentieth century (Emily mentions steam engines, bicycles and motorways) into the world of Dalemark at a time before that of the main action of the Dalemark series. The country is identified specifically as Dalemark, but the place names and landmarks are not quite the same as those we find in the later Dalemark books. Although its political atmosphere, with its feuding earls, resembles what it will become in the later works, the landscape and customs are equally suggestive of the borders of Scotland, appropriate given its source. None of the place names or landmarks is exactly the same as any in the series, although there are similarities.²⁷ The gods,

²⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, *Minor Arcana* (London: Gollancz, 1996), p. 12.

²⁵ John MacQueen, 'Tradition and the Interpretation of *The Kingis Quair*', *The Review of English Studies*, 12:46 (May 1961), 117-131 (p. 117).

²⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, 'The True State of Affairs,' in *Minor Arcana* (London: Gollancz, 1996) pp. 153-287 (p. 202).

²⁷ There is reference to a place called Hathriver which is famous for its steam organ; this could be the Hannart of the later books. The political back-story of Asgrim the prisoner and his son Kjartan being held for ransom might be the germ for the subplot of Earl Keril ransoming his son Kialan in *Cart and Cwiddar*.

who will become so important in the series proper, are not what we know of there as the ‘Undying’ but have the names and apparent attributes of Norse gods: Odin, Thor, and Frey. It is, in fact, very tempting to read ‘Odin’ as one possible inspiration for the term ‘Adon’, used later, in the series proper, as both a name and a title meaning king or lord.

Emily is captured in the midst of a group of Northerners. She is persuaded to change clothes with a woman named Hilda, who turns out to be an important player in the drama that is taking place outside the walls of Emily’s prison. Hilda is perhaps the germ of the character Hildy in the series, the switching of clothing adapted into Maewen’s impersonation of Noreth in *The Crown of Dalemark*. Mendelsohn identifies this device as the classic ‘princess and beggar-maid’ trope,²⁸ but Emily does not realize until too late how disastrous this is for her. Her captors discover that she’s not Hilda, but Emily manages to persuade them, because she can write, that she is a lady, which wins her a measure of respect and slightly better treatment. As much to maintain her own sanity as for any other purpose, she asks her captors for paper to write on; the story is written in the form of her journal. We do not know who the intended addressee is. Indeed, the narrative appears to be Emily’s way of making sense of her own story, in which respect it is similar to the narrative of *The Spellcoats*, in series chronology the first of the Dalemark Series, but whereas Tanaqui, the narrator of *The Spellcoats*, is able to find and enact power in her own writing, Emily begins and ends the story completely powerless.

The novella is overtly metafictional. As mentioned, it is in the form of a journal; Linda Hutcheon notes that epistolary or journal-form novels call the reader’s attention to ‘the activity of writing as an event within the novel, as an event of equally great significance to that of the events of the story which he is supposed to be telling’.²⁹ As readers, we quickly discover that Emily is a far-from-reliable narrator. Time sequences are unclear, we are told that she writes different material for her gaolers, and there are deliberate breaks in the text to indicate times when she has been interrupted. This is a story as much about reading, however, as it is

²⁸ Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 95.

²⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *NN*, p. 22.

about writing: Emily ‘reads’ and misreads the clues that she is given, and we read along with her, forced to recognize that our own view is limited by the way Emily presents the material. As Patricia Waugh points out, ‘Metafiction [...] fails *deliberately* to provide its readers with sufficient or sufficiently consistent components for him or her to be able to construct a satisfactory alternate world. [...] Contexts are ostentatiously constructed, only to be subsequently deconstructed’.³⁰

The captors misread in the same way as she does: they first capture her because of the way she is dressed, mistaking her for one of the leaders in the rebellion. Then they assume that she is a ‘lady’ because she can write. There is an awkward scene in which Edwin, the chief captor, thinks Emily is being seductive because she meets him with her hair unbound, when in fact she has only been washing her hair and is letting it dry. She tells him she will ‘catch her death’ with her wet hair, and he reads that as a euphemism for orgasm, which she comments ‘it used to be in [our parlance]’.³¹

When Emily and Asgrim first see each other, Emily describes it in terms reminiscent of a romance novel: ‘Our eyes met, and we knew what we were both feeling like’.³² She thinks him a comely man, basing her judgement, as far as we can tell, from the way he walks: ‘This, I know, is a good man and a strong man,’ she declares.³³ Even as she learns more about him from her captors, she makes excuses for him; it becomes clear that he is quite ruthless, even to the extent of escaping before he knows for sure that his son, a hostage, has himself escaped. She feels hurt when he escapes because he is not thinking about her, and is afraid to admit how ruthless he really is.³⁴ As we, the readers, come to understand that he had no

³⁰ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 101.

³¹ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘The True State of Affairs,’ in *Minor Arcana* (London: Gollancz, 1996) pp. 153-287 (p. 160).

³² Jones, ‘True State’, p. 169.

³³ Jones, ‘True State’, p. 170.

³⁴ Jones, ‘True State’, p. 279.

interest in her at all, she is still making excuses for him, thinking that he rejected her because she did not make it clear how she felt.³⁵

The first time she sees him, he is walking under an apple tree that grows into the roof of the castle. He catches a leaf and puts it in his pocket. She wonders to herself whether they have the same custom in this country of catching a leaf to win a happy day.³⁶ Later on, Asgrim sends her one of a series of rather mysterious poems. There is a line in it, a reference to a 'dun leaf,' that she thinks is a direct reference to her seeing him catch the leaf: 'Some people do have a very wide angle of vision and see more from the corners of their eyes than most. I think Asgrim does'.³⁷ Near the end of the story, when Asgrim has escaped and she is free to leave her prison and explore the castle, she looks over at her prison from Asgrim's rooms, and realized that he could only see her from a very narrow part of the courtyard. It is therefore entirely possible that he was not even aware of her watching him.

We watch her evolving judgment of Asgrim's son (whose name she first spells Kiarten, based on the way she hears it said, then learns it is Kjartan). At first, she thinks him 'a splendidly light-hearted, energetic, matter of fact, jolly *boyish* boy'.³⁸ One look, and she determines that he likes her - 'Most kids do like me, which was one reason I gave up teaching'.³⁹ Later, she witnesses a scene between Kjartan and Wolfram, whom she has learned has a crush on Kjartan, where Kjartan rejects Wolfram seemingly cruelly, with what she perceives to be a knowingness that she describes as belonging to a 'practiced catamite'.⁴⁰ The implication, to Emily, is that Kjartan has been selling himself for favours in his own prison. After this incident, she receives a note from Kjartan, bidding her farewell, which she interprets as asking for complicity in her, that he is worried she'll 'tell his father'. She creates for herself a far more intimate relationship between them than in fact

³⁵ Jones, 'True State', p. 286.

³⁶ Jones, 'True State', pp. 169-70.

³⁷ Jones, 'True State', p. 220.

³⁸ Jones, 'True State', p. 200.

³⁹ Jones, 'True State', p. 202.

⁴⁰ Jones, 'True State', p. 227.

exists.

When she meets one of Asgrim's guards, whom she has been calling 'swart one,' she declares, 'I must say I have seldom seen anyone with such firm, clean, kindly good looks'. She thinks he has 'an air of cheerfulness and sanity about him,' and she is flustered enough by meeting him that she blushes, even though she thinks that he is not interested in her at all. She wonders how she could have missed him, but then suggests that Asgrim's personality always eclipsed anyone else he was around.⁴¹

Then there is her relationship with the guard who takes the closest interest in her: Wolfram. She despises him, mocking his considerably less-than-attractive appearance and his status as the bastard brother of Edwin, her chief captor. Yet, she misjudges him, as she misjudges everyone else. He is clumsily kind to her and does not betray her when he discovers her journal writings. She realizes ultimately that Wolfram has never dissembled with her. It would never occur to him to hurt her because he is her friend.

It is far from clear that she ever fully understands what is said to her: 'I keep replacing [Edwin's] words and phrases by what I understand them to mean in my English [...] But when I think of what he says, I think of it in translation, as it were'.⁴² Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, writes 'Someone coming into a strange country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive definitions that they give him; and he will often have to *guess* the meaning of these definitions, and will guess sometimes right, sometimes wrong'.⁴³ So, for example, someone could point at a blue vase and say 'that is blue' but the listener might think 'blue' meant the object's shape, not its colour. A word's meaning is in the way it is used.

One scene highlights this; she declares that she and the prisoners (Asgrim and his son) have found a new way to communicate, despite their captors. Asgrim

⁴¹ Jones, 'True State', p. 282.

⁴² Jones, 'True State', p. 171.

⁴³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations. The English Text of the Third Edition*, Trans. G.E.M. Ascombe (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 15.

and Kjartan come out into their courtyard and start singing a song, stamping their feet to the rhythm. It's quite clear that she can't hear a word of what they are singing, especially, she notes, because the wind is blowing. She assumes they are singing a Yule song and claps and laughs at them. The men's captors stop the singing and bustle them inside. As it is for Emily, it is impossible for readers to know what song they were singing, although there may be a clue in the poem Asgrim sends Emily. Three versions of the poem appear in 'True State of Affairs'. A fourth appears in *Cart and Cwiddar*, where it is identified as a 'song of the Adon,' sung by the freedom-fighters. It is tempting to think that Asgrim and Kjartan were singing this song as a signal to Emily. We learn, after Asgrim has escaped, that he has been sending coded messages out to sympathizers in the village. It seems entirely possible that the notes that he sends Emily are for the same purpose, not the love notes that she believes them to be.

Emily describes herself as not a person 'who finds it easy to think in grand abstractions'.⁴⁴ Indeed, it can be argued that this is to some extent her downfall. Failure of imagination, and of empathy, results in her misreading her own situation, reading messages literally when they should be read figuratively, but also writing herself as the heroine of the wrong story.

When she first sees Asgrim, she thinks 'Else a great Prince in prison lies'.⁴⁵ This is a line from Donne's 'The Ecstasy,' which describes how a soul must become unified with the body, integrating body and soul. This is surprisingly apt, not for Emily, who is quoting it because Asgrim is literally lying in prison, but because this is the main argument of *The Kingis Quaire*. If we substitute 'imagination' for 'soul', it is also one of the ideas that lie behind the poems that Asgrim sends to Emily, and a foundational concept for Diana Wynne Jones.

The final poem that Asgrim sends Emily reads as follows:

But truth, which is another thing
Aside from laws or words or time,

⁴⁴ Jones, 'True State', p. 151.

⁴⁵ Jones, 'True State', p. 176.

Has strangely entered space,
 Lifting the clod from under
 Moving men from men asunder
 And only leaves us dying.
 Truth is the fire that fetches thunder,
 Kindled of itself, and only mine
 In the heart that had its fashioning.

Emily, still looking for the literal answer, declares ‘I wish I knew what the hell it means. I get the feeling that it refers to a complete argument of which I am ignorant – terms, conclusions and all. Or it could be the private vision of a sick mind’.⁴⁶ This again recalls Wittgenstein, who notes ‘One can also imagine someone’s having learnt the game [of chess] without ever learning or formulating rules’.⁴⁷ The poem reappears in *Cart and Cwiddier*, indeed, it appears in one form or another in all the Dalemark books except *The Spellcoats*, and its underlying message seems to be the central notion that truth must encompass both dreams and reality. This doubleness is, as this thesis will show, an essential theme in Jones’s work. The two worlds – real and imaginary, literal and metaphorical – coexist and overlap, but Emily never truly understands this. At the end of the novella, after Asgrim has escaped, Wolfram tells her about the hangings of villagers believed to have helped the escape. She says ‘as usual Wolfram has made the vivid thing commonplace and given plain facts a dreary oddity. He has made Asgrim sound so cynical, so calculating’.⁴⁸ Emily longs for the story but is either incapable of understanding or refuses to acknowledge the truth of the situation. Although we are never given his side of the story, it seems that Asgrim is cynical and calculating as well as being something of a swashbuckling hero. Emily believes herself to be a character in a romance (in the broadest sense of the word) when she is only a bit player.

⁴⁶ Jones, ‘True State’, p. 272.

⁴⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Jones, ‘True State’, p. 277.

As mentioned earlier, the fantasy element in this novella is less important than its study of Emily's role as an interpreter – indeed a mis-interpreter – of events. Yet both her complete isolation as a prisoner and her position as effectively an alien, brought in to Dalemark from another world, are central in contributing to her inability to 'read' her situation correctly. Emily's tragedy is that she never changes. She fails to understand herself, and her dismissal of 'abstracts' renders her unable to see beyond the walls of her own prison. There is no solid truth in the story she places herself in. Had she been able to comprehend two worlds – the abstract as well as the concrete, the metaphoric as well as the literal – perhaps her outcome would have been less bleak.

A writerly text, in Barthes' conception, demands that the reader participate but also that the reader allow his or her mind to explore freely the possibilities offered therein, not simply to accept a single interpretation or point of view. Emily fails because she expects her 'text' – the limited world she finds herself in – to be 'readerly': to provide a single correct answer and to conform to the contextual clues that she expects based on her own background and experience. When readers negotiate her story, as with most other works by Diana Wynne Jones, we are able to 'read between the lines' and indeed Jones provides readers with tools to enable them to do so; an intertextual reading, in fact, can provide an extra context or contexts for the work that allows Barthes' 'circular memory of reading' to occur. An intertextual reading opens a conceptual space where the imagination can have free-reign.

Chapter Five: Worlds of the Imagination: Multiverse, Chronotope, and Heterotopia

Introduction

Alternate worlds could, as Maria Nikolajeva has suggested,¹ be considered a feature, even a trademark, of Diana Wynne Jones's work, especially if you include a kind of 'other' magically charged dimension that lies behind this one, an element I will discuss in my next chapter. I have already investigated the way Jones subverts various societal or genre 'rules' in her work; in this chapter I will examine how Jones explores to their limits the rules of time and space and how she uses the device of multiple worlds or other forms of conceptual space to make concrete her more philosophical notions of the possibilities offered by the creative imagination. As we have seen, Jones persistently offers readers the idea that there is more than one right way of doing things; in multiverse theory, different outcomes to a story, different aspects of a character's identity, all the 'what ifs' that an author can explore, can be actualized.

This chapter will explore three distinct conceptual spaces: the multiverse, the 'mythosphere,' which I will investigate in the context of Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, and the heterotopia. I will demonstrate the ways that all three can be aligned with Jones's use of intertextuality; all three not only exemplify Jones's interest in structural 'theme and variations' and the way that a single story-idea or plot point can be written in many different ways, but also offer readers the opportunity to share a similar experience to that undergone by the characters in the books. The characters travel the multiverse, play in the mythosphere or enter the

¹ Maria Nikolajeva, 'Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones,' in *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Ed. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 25-39 (p. 25). In this article, Nikolajeva equates alternate worlds and the multiverse with heterotopias. I believe these are distinct and different concepts and will define heterotopia according to Foucault's original use of the term.

heterotopia, and the texts —in a mimesis of the process of discovery — become multiverse, mythosphere or heterotopia for readers.

Worlds Enough and Time: The Multiverse

With developments in quantum physics and through the work of such luminaries as Stephen Hawking and of Hugh Everett III, who first proposed it, multiverse theory – the notion that parallel universes, possibly an infinite number of them, exist along with our own — has become something of a common-place. Although in science they are still very much in the realm of the theoretical, physicist Max Tegmark argues that ‘the key question is ... not whether there is a multiverse [...] but rather how many levels it has’.² Tegmark describes what he calls the simplest and most popular version, Level 1 multiverse, a scenario where there are infinite variations, ‘where even the most unlikely of events must take place somewhere’.³ The multiverse that appears in *The Homeward Bounders*, that I shall discuss in more detail in a subsequent chapter, is reminiscent of this Level 1 scenario; Helen, the priestess of a god named Uquar, another name for Prometheus, relates how ‘The wider times have every possibility in them, so there must be a traverse where you can admit to your exile. That is the logic of Uquar’.⁴

John Clute credits both Michael Moorcock and John Cowper Powys with coining the term multiverse in popular literature (or perhaps at least its use as a descriptor for fantasy).⁵ In an interview, Jones recalls that she had read one or two books before *Charmed Life* in which parallel worlds existed, but not that they were

² Max Tegmark, ‘Parallel Universes’, 7 Feb 2003, available <<https://arxiv.org/abs/astro-ph/0302131>>, p. 1.

³ Tegmark, p. 3.

⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Homeward Bounders* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 69.

⁵ ‘Multiverse’, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, Eds. John Clute and John Grant (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

accessible for people to travel to, and that the idea was new to fantasy.⁶ When asked if she was influenced by theories of quantum physics, she claims that they were talked about later (*Charmed Life*, the first of the Chrestomanci series, was first published in 1977) and that she was ‘highly delighted’ to think that science was saying this was possible.⁷

John Clute names the Chrestomanci series along with Joan Aiken’s James III series as an example of ‘Alternate World’ fantasy, but I believe there is a difference between a simple alternate world and a multiverse that is crucial. Usually when we think of an alternate world, we consider one that is separate from our own, existing independently. It is an ‘immersive’ fantasy; there does not necessarily have to be movement between worlds or intrusion of a character from one world to another. Even when there is intrusion or movement between worlds, it is possible to have an alternate world fantasy that does not necessarily exist within a multiverse: Alan Garner’s *Elidor* to name just one. Of course, they are not mutually exclusive; an alternate world could exist within a multiverse, but there are not many examples outside of Jones’s work in which the multiverse itself is central to the plot. It is not clear, either, whether among Jones’s works, the world of Ingary, from which the characters travel back and forth to Wales in our world, or that of Derkholm, to which tourist groups travel from our world, are part of a larger multiverse. Certainly, that is not made explicit.

An obvious example prior to Jones – although one that she does not cite as a predecessor – is C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia*, which begins as an alternate world fantasy but where, in *The Magician’s Nephew* (incidentally Jones’s favourite of the series), it is made clear that *Narnia* is just one of a possibly infinite number of worlds. Jones even writes about the striking imagery of the Wood Between the Worlds.⁸ Perhaps

⁶ Catherine Butler, ‘Interview with Diana Wynne Jones’, in *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Ed. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 163-172 (p. 165).

⁷ Butler, ‘Interview’, p. 166.

⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Reading C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia*,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp. 47-50 (p. 40).

this is one of the ‘one or two’ books she mentions having read, or perhaps Jones regarded this as a late addition to the Narnia series and not part of Lewis’s original conception. Of course, Lewis’s worlds are not strictly multiverses in the quantum sense, in that each world appears to be a separate creation rather than coming into being randomly at crossroads of history or representing infinite possibility. As well, Jones comments on the fact that in the Narnia books movement between worlds is not something accessible to everyone, and that nobody beside the chosen few gets to Narnia ‘unless they are dead’.⁹ Although Jones shared something of Lewis’s Platonism, another important distinction, as Mendlesohn points out, is that Lewis regarded both Narnia and Earth as ‘Shadowlands,’ and the same could be said for the planet Perelandra.¹⁰ Guy Gavriel Kay’s Fionavar trilogy is an example that follows that pattern: another world where the same story – in Kay’s case, the tragedy of King Arthur rather than the Biblical story of Christ – is acted out. There is a certain inevitability to the outcome, and both in a Platonic sense are copies or shadows of one ‘real’ story or ‘ur’ myth. As we have already seen, Jones likes to subvert readers’ expectations so that no outcome is expected or inevitable, and in terms of the way the alternate stories work in the multiverse, Jones’s approach suggests that there is not one ‘true’ story.

The Chrestomanci series, which is largely set in a version of Victorian or Edwardian England, but one where the French won the Battle of Agincourt, proposes a multitude of alternate worlds accessible from our own, multiple variations of a particular world created when an important event in history could have had more than one outcome. Catherine Butler asserts that Jones pioneered

⁹ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Writing for Children: A Matter of Responsibility,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 72-78 (p. 73).

¹⁰ Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), Kindle Edition, loc. 5649.

the ‘allohistorical’ – alternate history – multiverse in children’s literature;¹¹ we again need to make a distinction here between the multiverse and the simple alternate world, as Joan Aiken’s series of books about an alternate Britain where James the Third is on the throne obviously pre-dates Jones. The worlds in the Chrestomanci multiverse are divided into Series, according to the events in history which were the same in them. It is very unusual for a person not to have a double in a world of the same series, and it is possible to have doubles in different series. Nine-lived enchanters, such as Christopher Chant – the Chrestomanci – or his cousin Cat, happen when there’s no counterpart in another world. Cat’s wicked sister Gwendolyn has a series of doubles, one who is a shy orphan, another who rules as an empress, and one, Janet, who lives an ordinary life with her parents in what seems to be our own world. When Gwendolyn escapes from her world, she pushes all the doubles into the next world in the series, so that Janet lands in Chrestomanci’s world. Gwendolyn is a witch; Janet can’t do magic at all. Gwendolyn moves from one world to the next abruptly, through a portal; Christopher Chant, who has the power to travel from world to world by himself does so via The Place Between, a space that as Mendlesohn points out is reminiscent of Lewis’s *Wood Between the Worlds*.¹² The multiple worlds, and the variations on characters within them, are Jones’s way of demonstrating the limitless possibilities offered in the multiverse.

The dynamics of the Chrestomanci multiverse are the ‘what ifs’: how the world would have been changed if events in history had a different outcome, or how a person might be different were he or she to have been born in a different world. For example, in *Charmed Life*, Janet remarks ‘I’m beginning to wonder if I mightn’t have been [a witch] if I’d lived here all my life’.¹³ As discussed previously,

¹¹ Catherine Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children’s Fantasies Of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), pp. 69 and 94 n. 108.

¹² Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 81.

¹³ Diana Wynne Jones, *Charmed Life* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1979), p. 96.

the alternate history allows Jones to retell the story of Romeo and Juliet with a happy ending in *The Magicians of Caprona*. The most overtly metafictional of the Chrestomanci series, *Witch Week*, describes a kind of sub-world in the multiverse that never should have been formed because the event in history (Guy Fawkes failing or not to blow up Parliament) wasn't important enough. The world is literally talked out of existence in a riotous variation on the game of Simon Says. *Witch Week* stresses the power of storytelling, which one character, Nan, describes as being 'as good as witchcraft any day'.¹⁴ As mentioned, through the multiverse, characters can explore different identities; the 'allohistorical' aspect of the multiverse is also suggestive of the way stories can be told in many different ways, without fixed or predictable outcomes, a concept that we shall see Jones explore even further in *The Game*. Another novel in the Chrestomanci series, *Conrad's Fate*, recounts what could happen if someone had the power to exploit the possibilities offered by the multiverse. The villain of the novel creates a machine that allows him to 'pull the possibilities' in order to change outcomes and win at the stock market. Each time this happens there are consequences, and there is an amusing depiction of the kind of 'cascading changes' that occur, so that characters find themselves cooking boiled eggs instead of fried or discover that their clothes have changed colour.

Just as this plot point of *Conrad's Fate* echoes the working of the creative imagination, so does the structure of one of the novels in the 'Magid' duology reproduce the universe it describes. The multiverse in *Deep Secret* and *The Merlin Conspiracy* is said to be 'in the manner of a spiral nebula twisted like a Moebius strip to become endless'.¹⁵ One half of it is magical, the one tilted 'Ayewards'; the other, 'Naywards,' is not. It is the role of the Magids – a group of magically talented individuals spread throughout the multiverse – to try to influence events, nudge outcomes, and bring about the Intentions handed down by a mysterious enclave known as the Upper Room. One Magid describes his role, not coincidentally, as similar to Jones's own:

¹⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, *Witch Week* (London: Magnet, 1985), p. 204.

¹⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *Deep Secret* (New York: Tor, 1997), p. 7.

When I was a lad, no one even considered there might be other universes, let alone talking of *going* to them. But now people write books about that, and they talk about working magic and having former lives, and nobody thinks you're a nutcase for mentioning it. And I think, *I* did that. *Me. I* slid us back down the spiral. Back to where we should be.¹⁶

The moebius strip quality of the universe is echoed in the corridors of the Babylon Hotel featured in *Deep Secret*, about which more below, where I will discuss its role as a heterotopia. The time-line of *The Merlin Conspiracy* also has a moebius-strip-like quality; it loops back upon itself. Nick, one of the protagonists, who hopes to become a Magid, or at least to gain control of a Magid's ability to travel between worlds, learns a sense of responsibility for his actions that results from his travelling in time. As in *Witch Week*, there's a touch of the 'butterfly effect,' where the smallest action sets in motion events that bring serious consequences. Nick precipitates the main conflict of the novel by being rude to someone he doesn't know over the phone. He is also inadvertently responsible for the fall of the economy of Loggia city, on one of the worlds he visits, when he tells artisans there, who are being exploited, that their work could be worth a lot of money. They take their work to another world. Nick says 'I can't get over the way such small things led to such incredibly large, violent events'.¹⁷ The causality is in actuality somewhat mind-boggling. Nick is propelled into the world where he has the phone conversation in the first place by someone whom he met in an earlier time in that same world. Mendlesohn notes, aptly, that 'time is less traversed than it is interwoven'.¹⁸

The experience of travelling between worlds, as is perhaps appropriate in a quantum universe, seems to be relative to the observer. Nick, in *The Merlin*

¹⁶ Jones, *Deep Secret*, p. 18.

¹⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Merlin Conspiracy* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 472.

¹⁸ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, p. 16.

Conspiracy, is just pushed without transition from one world to the next, with the result that he doesn't immediately realize that he's in another world, but thinks he is dreaming. Then he finds himself in a kind of intermediary space, a wood, where he meets a powerful enchanter named Romanov. At one point, we see the worlds through the eyes of a goat: a string of islands 'like unstrung beads, or huge stepping stones'.¹⁹ What is important, though, is that although the perceptions of the paths between the worlds and even of the worlds themselves changes with the observer, all are equally 'real'. When Nick meets Romanov for the first time, he asks 'Is this wood real, then?' Romanov replies 'All the paths and places beyond the world have substance'. Nick asks 'Even if you can see *that* [another world] from here? They can't both be real'. 'You have a very limited notion of what's real, don't you,' says Romanov.²⁰

As I will discuss in more detail in a subsequent chapter, the laws of the multiverse represented in *The Homeward Bounders* have the same sense that worlds are real to those who perceive them, but also represent the notion that any possibility, whether of identity or outcomes, could exist somewhere in the multiverse. As Helen and Jamie traverse the 'bounds' of the multiverse, at one point Helen thinks she sees her mother in a crowd. Jamie explains to her that it is simply the person her mother would have been had she been born on that world. We all make our own worlds real by believing that they are and that other worlds are not, but, as Romanov makes clear in the above quotation from *The Merlin Conspiracy*, every world is as real as any other world. At the end of *The Homeward Bounders*, in a kind of reversal of Peter Pan's 'do you believe in fairies,' Jamie tells readers that if we read his story and *don't* believe it, we will provide some safeguard against the controlling demons from which his personal sacrifice has freed us.

Over the Rainbow: The Mythosphere

Jones writes that she remembers how, as a twelve-year-old, sick in bed, she

¹⁹ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 390.

²⁰ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 55.

read a scholarly book which was mostly sixteen versions of the same Persian folktale (the glass mountain), but ordered in such a way that, while the outline of the story never changed, you watched the story shift from one sort of narrative (trial of strength and valour) to another (test of character).²¹ She mentions this on several occasions in her non-fiction writing, so one assumes that it had an impact on her at the time and perhaps an influence on her work, or at least on her way of thinking about telling stories. We have already seen in Chapter Two the allusive way she represents mythical figures such as Herne the Hunter, where the identification is not absolutely clear, but where a given figure, with given characteristics (such as a hunter who runs hounds with red ears), can be recognized as one mythical character, or many, or all at once. Once again, as we have seen before, the key is to remember that the truth can have many shapes.

The most interesting aspect of an otherwise rather slight novella, *The Game*, is one of Jones's most remarkable inventions: the 'mythosphere'. As Gabriella Steinke has noted, apart from a couple of walk-on characters, everyone in the book is a mythological figure;²² Jones makes the unusual move of including an appendix identifying them by name. The main character, Hayley, is the daughter of Sisyphus and Merope; her aunts are the Pleiades. One of her grandfathers is Jupiter; the other is Atlas. The whole family has the power to traverse the mythosphere, and, although Jupiter has forbidden it, the younger generation make a kind of game of exploring it.

At the beginning of the book, Hayley is living with Atlas, who monitors the mythosphere, which appears on a computer screen, rather like a visualization of the world-wide-web. It appears as a globe 'swathed in a soft, multicoloured mist'. The mist is made up of pale threads, 'all of them moving and swirling outwards'.²³ Atlas tells Hayley 'It's made up of all the stories, theories and beliefs, legends, myths and

²¹ Diana Wynne Jones, 'Answers to Some Questions,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp.115-133 (p. 127).

²² Gabriela Steinke, 'The Games People Play,' *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 21:2 (2010), 187-196 (187).

²³ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Game* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 22.

hopes, that are generated here on Earth. As you can see, it's constantly growing and moving as people invent new tales to tell or find new things to believe'.²⁴ It is at the same time both a kind of repository of story and an organizational device; the threads represent versions of a story or the way that a story is rewritten or evolves over time, and the stories are sorted into threads of the same type of story. The older strands 'harden off' and move out to where things become crude and dangerous; there is a significant implication here that stories *need* to evolve and change; when they are 'fixed,' they become dangerous. Hayley asks her grandfather if the stories are as real as atoms and planets, and her grandfather tells her 'Quite as real - even realer in some ways'.²⁵

Steinke suggests that the mythosphere is like a visualization of Borges's Library of Babel, but Borges's library, which contains an infinite combination of words, is more suggestive of the multiverse. The mythosphere is not itself a multiverse (in fact it's made explicit in the text that the mythosphere is part of a multiverse),²⁶ nor is it clear whether the world in which the novella is set is 'our' world or a parallel one within the multiverse. That isn't important. Steinke believes that the story is set in this world, and that thus readers are offered the opportunity to play in the mythosphere. Once again, I believe that Jones would not endorse one version of 'reality' as more important or more 'real' than another. What the mythosphere represents is possibility; it is a creative space, but a space into which it is possible for characters to travel and for us to venture into along with them as part of the experience of reading. As in *Hexwood*, various timelines exist simultaneously, with the result that story outcomes can be changed. Steinke questions Troy's exclamation – when the family have overthrown Jupiter and gained control of the mythosphere – that 'We can all do what we want to do. At last!' finding this ambiguous in the context that we know what 'happened' to the city of Troy.²⁷ I would argue that this is Jones's comment on the power of story:

²⁴ Jones, *The Game*, p. 23.

²⁵ Jones, *The Game*, p. 23.

²⁶ Jones, *The Game*, p. 109.

²⁷ Steinke, p. 194.

characters (and by implication readers) can live out different versions in the mythosphere. The ability to travel the mythosphere, whether literally – in the reality of the story – or as part of the reading experience, represents the limitless power of the imagination.

As a virtual space, the mythosphere can be seen as analogous to Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. Bakhtin, of course, is best known for his concept of dialogism, which is identified as one origin of the concept of intertextuality, but more interesting for our purposes here is the less familiar notion of the chronotope, outlined in 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel'. Bakhtin defines the chronotope as 'The intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' and argues that it has 'intrinsic *generic* significance'.²⁸ He argues 'This explains the simultaneous existence in literature of phenomena taken from widely separate periods of time'.²⁹ Reduced to the time and place where a story takes place, one might make the mistake of thinking that the chronotope is simply another term for setting. It is, rather, all the associations one has, through custom, convention and genre, with a particular setting. So, for example, one might have a country house as a setting. Bakhtin would argue for the chronotope of the country house, which is the sum of the conventions around the use of that setting in novels throughout history, and all the weight of those associations. He uses the term 'adventure time' to suggest a time and space unique to the story or to the genre - as in Greek romance adventure or chivalric romance. He also talks about the chronotope of the road, the encounter, the threshold, or the provincial town. These chronotopes can become a kind of novelistic shorthand, which operates in a very intertextual way. For example, the castle, he says, has the weight of history, and Sir Walter Scott, Bakhtin argues, uses the *idea* of the castle as a source of images.³⁰ He also discusses the chronotope of the reader and our relationship with a specific text: 'our creation of it, our acquaintance with it occurs

²⁸ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas, 1981), pp. 84-85.

²⁹ Bakhtin, p. 85.

³⁰ Bakhtin, p. 246.

through time'.³¹ 'Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work'.³² He argues that the relation between chronotopes is dialogic:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers. Of course, this process of exchange is itself chronotopic: it occurs first and foremost in the historically developing social world, but without ever losing contact with changing historical space. We might even speak of a special *creative* chronotope inside which this exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work.³³

The swirling globe of the mythosphere, with its shifting and growing threads of story, could easily be a representation of this notion of the chronotope or chronotopes. When Hayley first goes into the mythosphere, it looks to her like a forest with many branching paths. As she moves through the forest, she sees stories relating to a hunting motif, presented referentially, but inspiring the reader through the power of association. If we consider this Bakhtin's chronotope of, say, hunting, with a subset of swans, we can imagine and then see realized, along with Hayley, all the stories we might know about swans: what appears to be Swan Lake, then the Swan Princes, then a scene where a young woman - probably Leda - tentatively holds out her hand to a swan, and 'There was something about the big swan Hayley didn't like at all'.³⁴ What is interesting to note is that the mythosphere does not just collect different versions of the same myth, they are placed along a

³¹ Bakhtin, p. 252.

³² Bakhtin, p. 253.

³³ Bakhtin, p. 254.

³⁴ Jones, *The Game*, p. 44.

generic axis. Sisyphus, for example, is shown developing from the character that we know from Greek myth to a harassed office clerk in the present day, with an in-box that never empties. We can see such generic development as reflecting the notion Jones describes in her story of the sixteen Persian folktales. Most importantly, Hayley, and by association the reader, is given agency. Because these are story elements, and there are multiple possible ways of assembling those elements, there is the possibility of retelling and rejuvenating the story or rehabilitating the ending. In the hunting sequence, Hayley meets Actaeon as a boy hunting with his dogs and again as a slightly older young man. Flute, who accompanies her, hustles her past to avoid her witnessing him being torn to pieces by his own dogs. When she returns home, she imagines the scene of the boy and his dog again, but this time with a happy ending, and she brings him to life in her room. Like Jones herself, Hayley has the freedom and power of a story-teller who is not afraid of breaking the 'rules'.

The plot-line and structure of the story enact the forming of a thread on the mythosphere. Hayley's grandfather Atlas is studying the apple motif in the mythosphere and comments that they are everywhere: 'Golden apples all over. They cause death and eternal life and danger and choices. They *must* be important. But none of them combine. None of them spiral and harden'.³⁵ In fact, the apple motif runs through Hayley's story, as if Jones herself is spinning a new story from the threads within the mythosphere. Hayley's cousin Harmony is in charge of the titular game played in the mythosphere by her family, and where one of Hayley's tests is to capture an apple from the garden of the Hesperides. Hayley's mysterious friend Flute, who is the guardian of the garden, tells Hayley that Harmony herself has stolen more of the apples than he would care to count, and now has the run of the universe, 'probably the whole multiverse'.³⁶ At the end of the story, the twins, Flute and Fiddle, one who appears in daylight and one who appears at night, change places. Fiddle tells Hayley that they change places when a strand of the mythosphere is completed;³⁷ it is tempting to think that this was the golden apple

³⁵ Jones, *The Game*, p. 24.

³⁶ Jones, *The Game*, p. 109.

³⁷ Jones, *The Game*, p. 174.

strand, and that Hayley has completed it by helping to overthrow the power of her grandfather Jupiter.

Apples and rainbows run through Hayley's story, both symbols of creativity and disruption. Hayley's grandfather describes the stories in the mythosphere involving apples – The Judgement of Paris, and Atalanta – and of course we can't forget the story of Eve in the garden of Eden. Atlas gives Hayley a strange (and somewhat unsuitable) collection of books to read: *At the Back of the North Wind*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Rainbow*, *Fanny Hill*, and *Where the Rainbow Ends*. *Where the Rainbow Ends* is a story, like Hayley's, about children in search of their parents, and features Saint George and the dragon, the dragon motif perhaps reflected in the one whom Hayley meets in her first trial in the mythosphere. At one point, when Hayley enters the mythosphere, she hears the tune 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'. In Greek mythology, the rainbow is associated with Iris, the messenger, but it is also commonly seen as a symbol of hope, or as a bridge to another world. Ultimately, Hayley is responsible for overthrowing the overbearing Jupiter, freeing her and her family to make use of the mythosphere and allowing them to make new stories; as a comet (Halley's Comet), she is also to an extent a fire-bringer. Although Hayley does not suffer the kind of personal sacrifice that is undergone by Jamie in *The Homeward Bounders*, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, she can be seen to play a similar role; by being instrumental in the overthrow of Jupiter, she is a Prometheus figure, in the sense of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, whose freedom allows the unfettered power of the imagination to be available to all.

Bigger on the Inside: Heterotopias

All the spaces I discuss in this chapter can be seen to be sites for creativity and possibility, and analogues for the working of intertextuality. The multiverse is a theoretical concept, based on science but not yet proven to exist in reality; Jones exploits it as a plot device that allows her to explore the 'what-ifs' of history and her characters to see what they might become born in a different world. The mythosphere is a marvelous invention that brings to life the relationships between

all the myths and stories in the world and again allows characters and readers to consider different outcomes or new variations on familiar stories. The third of the spaces I wish to discuss is the heterotopia, a real place, but one as theorized by Michel Foucault that offers itself as a means of transition from one world to the next and offers characters the opportunity to be at one remove from the 'real' world and to try on different roles. In the sense that a heterotopia is a space that brings together elements from different places or different aspects of life, I will also suggest that a text can be a heterotopia for readers, where they undergo an experience that reflects that of the characters within the text.

Brian Atteberry, commenting on Hope Mirrlees' 1926 novel *Lud-in-the-Mist*, argues that Mirrlees subtly combines magic and realism and 'constructs a ludic space in which observed reality and symbol interact on the same plane'.³⁸ I would argue that the same occurs in several of Jones's books, and that this ludic space can be equated conceptually at least with Foucault's concept of the heterotopia. Michel Foucault coined the term 'heterotopia' in his 1986 essay 'Of Other Spaces'. He argues that space was conscribed and limited in the Middle Ages by a clearly defined and 'hierarchic ensemble of places',³⁹ but that now those clear demarcations have been replaced by openness, defined by relationships or proximity between points, but often somewhat randomly accessed (via the automobile, for example, or the telephone). We still have some clearly defined places organized by business or activities, but 'Space takes for us the form of relations among sites'.⁴⁰ He is interested in certain spaces 'that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect'.⁴¹ These are of two types: the utopia, which does not exist, and the

³⁸ Brian Atteberry, *Stories About Stories. Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 68.

³⁹ Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces,' Trans. Jay Miskoviec, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (Spring 1986), 22-27 (p. 22).

⁴⁰ Foucault, p. 23.

⁴¹ Foucault, p. 24.

heterotopia, which does, but which exists outside of and may serve to disturb or upset more ‘conventional’ forms of space. Heterotopias are accessible to us, although Foucault argues that admission often requires some kind of ‘ritual’ even if that is something as simple as purchasing a ticket, but when in them we may be at one step removed from the ‘real’ world and free from some of its restraints. They take different forms, which may be pleasurable or not; examples are brothels, prisons, boarding schools, fairgrounds and gardens.

In her article on heterotopias in children’s fantasy, Alice Jenkins focusses on trains. She proposes that trains can be described as heterotopias because while the examples Foucault uses (cinemas, theatres, and gardens) bring several sites together in space, trains bring them together in time.⁴² She writes ‘a train offers the possibility of movement within a space which is itself moving’ which is both part of and separated from the outside world and argues that the ‘capacity for ambiguous power relations allows trains to be used as quasi-magical spaces, moving between two worlds and often creating a third within themselves’.⁴³ She cites Arnold van Gennep’s work on liminal spaces, arguing that the train journey ‘is the crossing of a threshold, but a crossing that may have extended temporal duration [...] thus cocooning the person making the crossing within a bubble of space and time’.⁴⁴ According to Van Gennep, thresholds are ‘neutral zones’ between magically or spiritually determined spaces.⁴⁵ The Hogwarts express of the Harry Potter books is an obvious example, but Jenkins also discusses the train journeys featured in C.S. Lewis’s Narnia books, and the train journey at the beginning of *The Crown of Dalemark*, the fourth of Jones’s Dalemark quartet. Jenkins describes one of the protagonists, Maewen, falling asleep on the train on her way to visit her father,

⁴² Alice Jenkins, Jenkins, Alice, ‘Getting to Utopia: Railways and Heterotopia in Children’s Literature’, *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, Eds Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.23-37 (p. 24).

⁴³ Jenkins, ‘Getting to Utopia’, pp. 27-28.

⁴⁴ Jenkins, ‘Getting to Utopia’, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Jenkins, ‘Getting to Utopia’, p. 28.

where there is a kind of overlap with the past.⁴⁶ Maewen also has an encounter with the evil power Kankredin, although at that point in the novel she does not know what is happening. Although Jenkins discusses the train journey at the end of Susan Cooper's *Silver on the Tree*, she does not mention the similar episode at the end of *Fire and Hemlock* which also serves precisely the function Jenkins describes of bringing together all the players in the story and transporting them between the mundane and the enchanted world.

For our purposes, I believe that there are two really significant heterotopias in Jones's work beyond what Jenkins discusses. Both the Babylon Hotel, in the novel *Deep Secret*, and Banners Wood, in *Hexwood*, are places where all the characters ultimately meet, but which are removed from the real world, where time has no dominion, and identities shift. Within them, the characters suffer ordeals, undergo processes of self-discovery, and ultimately resolve conflict before returning to their 'real' lives. Narratively, Banners Wood serves a similar function to the 'Green World' of Renaissance comedies, and one can see the conceptual relationship between it and the Forest of Arden.

The Babylon Hotel is host to a fantasy and science fiction 'con,' held at Easter, almost certainly based on a real-life 'EasterCon' with which Jones would have been familiar. There are three interwoven narrative voices: one, Rupert, we know from the start is a Magid, one of those magically gifted individuals who oversee events in the moebius-strip multiverse. He is tasked with appointing a new Magid, and has to choose between several candidates, all of whom, not coincidentally, converge on the hotel. He needs a node of power to bring them all together, and this hotel is one; the power is enhanced because of it being Easter. One of the other narrators, Maree, is one of the candidates; her cousin Nick is also magically gifted. They are at the hotel because they are family members of one of the guests of honour at the Con.

Without any particular enhancement, a hotel is always a kind of heterotopia, in Foucault's sense, in its role as a home away from home, attracting guests from all walks of life and all nations. Put a 'Con' within it, and its heterotopic tendencies are

⁴⁶ Jenkins, 'Getting to Utopia', p. 32.

increased. A ‘Con’ is a time for people to throw off inhibitions, to assume a different identity, to participate in cosplay, to speak in codes and languages known only to one’s fellow attendees. This particular hotel has qualities that even further enhance its role. Case, the Dutch ‘Gopher’ in the hotel (who is also one of the potential Magids), describes the hotel as ‘straight out of Escher’.⁴⁷ Each floor seems to have more corners than it should, and travelling from the lift to the door of one’s hotel room becomes an ordeal in itself. The ceiling of the foyer is a mass of mirrors; Maree recalls ‘The entire confusion of folk was reflected there, upside-down, milling about, sort of hanging there mixed up with trees in urns and piles of suitcases [...] I could see Nick and me. We rippled from one mirror to another as I moved my head [...] It gave me a queer feeling, as if I was reading the future in the sky’.⁴⁸

All three characters undergo significant trials during their stay at the hotel; Maree nearly dies, or at least comes close to becoming a vacant shell of her former self, before she accepts and assumes her role as a Magid. Rupert has to push his powers to their limit and learn to drop some of his prejudices in order to help her, and ultimately the two become romantically involved. Nick makes a considerable sacrifice in order to save Maree (although he is not so unselfish as to neglect to make sure he retains something for himself in the end). Identities are revealed, and a conflict on another world is resolved.

In Chapter Two, I documented the ‘real medievalizing fun’ that Jones had putting together all the references to Arthuriana and heroic fantasy that make up the non-linear and intertextually complex work that is *Hexwood*. As we saw there, the novel relates what happens when a minor employee of an interplanetary corporation run by an oligarchy of five Reigners, gets his hands on the bannus – an artificial intelligence whose actual task is to pick the most suitable candidates to be Reigners, but which has been put in storage by the corrupt current leader of the corporation. The employee asks the bannus to make him a game involving ‘hobbits on a grail quest,’ and literary hi-jinks ensue. The characters, and readers, are led

⁴⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *Deep Secret* (New York: Tor, 1997), p. 123.

⁴⁸ Jones, *Deep Secret*, p. 118.

through a dizzying maze of non-linear narrative and overlapping identities, complicated by the way Jones subverts any expectations we may have based on prior knowledge of heroic fantasy or grail quests.

The main action of the plot takes place in and around Hexwood Farm Estates, where the bannus machine has been stored. The bannus field spreads to include much of the neighbouring village and ‘Banners Wood’ – described initially as merely a clearing with a few scrubby trees and some rubbish: a Coke tin and an empty crisp packet. It is possible to see the roofs of houses on the next street over the tops of the trees. The names around the estate are significant: ‘Banners’ obviously derives from ‘bannus,’ and Merlin Lane, which leads one to the ‘Stas’ tomb where one of the previous Reigners has been imprisoned, gives us a clue about what we learn towards the end of the story: that the rebel Reigner, Martellian, had visited Earth using the name Merlin. The bannus field is complicated, however, by the fact that the Wood has its own field, and it is in this overlap of powerful influences that the roleplaying games are enacted.

Within the wood is the ‘story space’ where the games are acted out. This space, like Doctor Who’s Tardis, is distinctly bigger on the inside. Ann Stavely, a girl who lives on the housing estate, walks into the wood and discovers there many fantasy trappings: a mystical castle, a dragon, walking trees, and a shelter where the hermit-like Mordion is living with the boy Hume and his mechanical guardian Yam. Time shifts; every time Ann enters the wood she can never be certain what season it will be. Hume changes from infancy to toddler to teenage boy, but not necessarily in that order. All the Reigners, except Mordion, have names within the bannus field that reflect who they are in the roleplaying game, although as I have already discussed, often our expectations as readers based on their apparent roles are disrupted by Jones’s own subtle authorial game playing.

The main characters, in particular Ann and Mordion, undergo a journey of self-discovery, and part of that discovery is recognizing that they are under the control of the bannus. It is some time before Ann Stavely, or we along with her, realizes that ‘Ann’ is a character created by the bannus, and that in the ‘real’ world she is a twenty-something young woman named Vierran. The task for the reader is to construct a narrative from the non-linear fragments that we are provided with

and to piece together who is who. Martha Hixon has argued that *Hexwood* the novel enacts ‘the process that a novelist [...] engages in while creating a fictional story’.⁴⁹ It is also, I believe, an intensely writerly novel in the Barthesian sense, whose structure creates a mimesis of the process of reading and interpretation. It demands re-reading: the first reading can be a roller-coaster ride of confusion, interpretation and mis-interpretation. Through the non-linear story-line and the myriad intertextual allusions, the text itself becomes a figurative heterotopia where the reader can have an experience that echoes the experiences of the characters.

Not only is identity fluid in *Hexwood*, so is time. Farah Mendlesohn identifies three narrative patterns in *Hexwood*:

1. Reigner time, which is linear time, narrated in the direct third person, mimetic, and assumes full immersion into the story as normal.
2. Bannus time: linear and repetitive, narrated in a ‘midway point’ allowing Ann self-consciousness.
3. Wood time: spiral, intersecting with itself, third person but from Ann’s point of view.⁵⁰

It is actually a bit more complicated; often these patterns overlap or are difficult to distinguish. Part Four, Section 1 is set in ‘Reigner Time’. Three of the Reigners are discussing the fact that Reigner Two has been missing for days. They start watching what happened when Two and the Servant left the home planet. ‘The cube’s minor theta-field came into being there instead, flickering as it established’.⁵¹ Note that ‘theta-field’ is one of the terms used for the artificial intelligence known on Earth as the bannus. We then see what follows from the

⁴⁹ Martha Hixon, ‘Whose Woods These Are I Think I Know. Narrative Theory and Diana Wynne Jones’s *Hexwood*,’ *Telling Children’s Stories. Narrative Theory and Children’s Literature*, Ed. Mike Cadden (Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska Press, 2010), pp.251-267 (p. 252).

⁵⁰ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ*, pp. 75-76.

⁵¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *Hexwood* (London: Methuen, 1993), p. 97.

point of view of the Reigners, picking up their judgemental language at two levels: Reigner Two has a ‘pink, petulant face’ in the words of the narrator; Reigner Four comments ‘Doesn’t he look a fright in that costume?’.⁵² We are clearly watching the events unfold: ‘The tiny image was clear enough to show that Reigner Two was not sure whether to be pleased that his disguise was so good, or annoyed not to be as well-known as his Servant’.⁵³ The Reigners are watching and commenting, but what we are seeing is, in terms of ‘linear time,’ their past. Reigner Two and the Servant reach the gate of Hexwood Farm, and the image blanks out into a hissing white light: they have entered the bannus field.

An alert reader can identify the various points in the narrative where each of the characters enters the bannus field. When Reigner Four arrives at Hexwood Farm he searches for the bannus. He receives a communication from someone apparently in Japan (and we will draw a veil over Jones’s horrible imitation of a stereotypical Japanese accent) but which we are led to assume is probably the Bannus itself. It tells Reigner Four that the bannus is behind him. He swings round: ‘There was a moment of slight giddiness’. There is a section break. At the beginning of a new section: ‘Reigner Four found that what he was really doing was riding a horse down a long green glade in a forest’.⁵⁴ For a while, he retains his identity as Reigner Four, although he readily accepts his new role and enjoys it. He rides up to the Castle, where he meets King Ambitas (Reigner Two), who looks vaguely familiar to him. Ambitas asks him what he is doing: ‘I seek the Bannus,’ said Reigner Four, because he still knew that this was what he was doing here’. Ambitas tells him he has come to the right place and asks his name. At this point, very alert readers see the shift where Reigner Four switches into his bannus identity: “I am called Sir Fors,” said Reigner Four, because this seemed to him to be his name’. So Reigner Four ‘was conducted into the castle with great honour, where he spent his days in joy and minstrelsy and feasting.’⁵⁵ One should note, too,

⁵² Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 98.

⁵³ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 99.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 128.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 133.

the shift in diction to one that is more ‘medieval’ and echoes the shift in Reigner Four’s identity.

Reigner Five seems to be able to hold out against the power of the bannus, or at least perhaps the beguilement of the bannus, longer than other characters. He is deposited at the Castle in the guise of a monk but is fully conscious of who he is and whom he is seeing. He recognizes each of the characters by their Reigner identities rather than in the roles provided by the bannus, and comments grumpily about it, though he is somewhat puzzled by exactly where ‘reality’ and ‘invention’ begin and end. ‘The bent yellow fruit he took, expecting its ridiculous shape to mean it was an invention of the bannus, was a true fruit. And the whole roast ox *was* a whole roast ox’.⁵⁶ When the bannus comes into the hall in the form of a great chalice, he thinks, ‘Very nice!’ [...] ‘Pretty effect indeed!’ Then he tries to destroy it. ‘Reigner Five was congratulating himself, when he found that it was he that was wrapped in flames, and himself the centre of the explosion. For a thousandth of a thousandth of a second he held together, long enough to realise that the chalice was only another image and not the bannus at all. It had fooled him somehow’.⁵⁷ He finds himself in a hut in a wood, where he stays until he encounters Ann/Vierran; at that point, he is ‘killed’ but realizes that in fact he has been dead for some time. There’s a hint here that his consciousness, separate from his physical body, continues in the bannus field even when he is dead.

Jones creates the structure of the novel to mimic the action of the bannus field. The book is divided into nine parts. For the first seven parts, each is divided into exactly five sections, perhaps intended to echo the five members of a ‘hand’ of Reigners (it would be too obvious and easy if each part were devoted to a different character). That strict division breaks down at the precise moment (at least for the reader) when Mordion enters the Castle. The Bannus is bringing together all the characters in the Castle, with the intention of bringing about a confrontation between Mordion and Reigner One. Thenceforth, time becomes more understandable and linear, although many of the characters are still stuck in their

⁵⁶ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 168.

⁵⁷ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 169.

bannus-induced roles. Indeed, when Mordion and the Bannus finally ‘meet,’ when Mordion is in the form of a dragon, coming to terms with his own memories, the Bannus tells him that its actions stopped being multiple when Mordion decided to go to the Castle.⁵⁸ The end of the fifth section of Part Seven is also the last time we see ‘Ann’.

At the end of the novel, all identities and immediate conflicts are resolved, and the bannus field is shut down, at least temporarily. The Wood is left controlling its own virtual space, and in a scene that forms a microcosm of the concept I have been discussing here, the characters see into the depths of the now free wood, and spot little men with furry legs, wild animals, walking trees, and a white horse with a horn in its forehead. One character remarks that anyone going in there will take a long time getting out. Similarly, a reader enters *Hexwood* the novel at her own risk and could take a long time emerging from the paths of intertextual relationships that she encounters there.

Multiverses, mythospheres (or creative chronotopes), and heterotopias are all virtual, conceptual spaces, yet each of them arises out of and overlaps with spaces in the ‘real world’. Once again, intertextual clues can help a reader to compile landmarks, even develop a guide-book to help navigate the spaces of the imagination. Whether through multiverse theory, by exploring the paths of the mythosphere, or in the heterotopic spaces of the Babylon Hotel or Banners Wood, Jones once again offers readers the all-important sense of possibility. Enchantment does not have to be ‘elsewhere’, it may be just around the corner.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 242.

Chapter Six: “The Place Where the Stories Are”: Enchantment and Enchanted Spaces

Introduction

In my general introduction, I discussed what I believe to be a false critical dichotomy between fantasy and realistic fiction, which is often tied conceptually to the notion that because realism is anchored in the ‘real’ world, what occurs in a realistic novel has a metonymic relationship for the reader that re-creates actual experience, ‘real’ life, whereas fantasy takes place in some completely separate, unreal space, a secondary world, and can therefore only be read metaphorically. Although Rosemary Jackson notes that modern fantasy ‘is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance’, she focusses her study primarily on work that reflects a ‘post-Romantic, secularized culture’, seeming to dismiss much contemporary popular fantasy (such as that by Tolkien, Le Guin, or Lewis) as nostalgic, escapist, rather than functioning to ‘unsettle’ our notions of reality.¹ Fantasy, she argues bluntly, is not transcendental;² she then removes from her critical attention work such as the aforementioned that exhibits any turn towards the transcendental. Brian Attebery comments on writers who call attention to the disjunction between first-hand experience and traditional myth, arguing that ‘Stories about thresholds and overlapping realities can be said to function both as fantasy and metafantasy’. He suggests that in this way, ‘writers remind us that the great narratives that shape the world are, after all, texts’.³ Although Diana Wynne Jones has a true postmodern suspicion of ‘grand narratives,’ especially, as we have seen, if they are hide-bound and inflexible, her treatment of myth, the sacred, and the magical throughout her work doesn’t so much draw attention to the disjunction

¹ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 4.

² Jackson, p. 5.

³ Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories. Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 115.

between experience and myth, as to the overlap. Many, if not most of her novels take place in our world, or some offshoot of it, and throughout her work she offers the possibility that magic may be nearby, just around the corner or slightly out of eye-shot, and so may a transcendental experience, touching what she calls ‘the awesome’. Above all, she argues for the need for all human beings, but especially the creative ones, to be able to walk in two worlds. Myth, magic, and ‘the awesome,’ she suggests, are accessible – even essential - to anyone.

In her non-fiction writing, Jones frequently discusses the way she uses myth. She believed that with it she could bring her readers face-to-face with what she calls ‘the awesome’: the numinous, perhaps the transcendental. She writes (about *Eight Days of Luke*): ‘I wanted to show how the awesome leads both to and from everyday life. The gods themselves are the big thoughts that stalk through ordinary actions, as much a part of experience as the days of the week’.⁴ She wrote *Eight Days of Luke*, she explains, ‘to try to express how the ancient and chthonic things are in fact nearly always present to everyone’.⁵ She relates her own sense of ‘the awesome’ both to the ‘Piper at the Gates of Dawn’ chapter in *The Wind in the Willows*, which she read and loved despite her mother’s disapproval, and to two gardens that she remembers from her childhood. The conference centre where her family lived had two gardens: one a plain and mundane one in the front of the house, with neat rows of begonias and a gravel path, and another, behind a wall, that her father kept locked. Occasionally she was able to persuade him to let her in, and she describes what sounds like a magical place. She writes:

I see now that the two gardens of the conference centre came to represent to me the activities of the two sides of the human brain, the first concerned with day-to-day living and the second with all creative needs. But I put it to myself more in terms of enchantment as opposed to the mundane’.⁶

⁴ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Creating the Experience,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp.51-55 (p. 55).

⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘Answers to Some Questions,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp.115-133 (p. 126).

⁶ Jones, ‘Answers to Some Questions,’ p. 125.

This critical image of the ‘other garden’ reflects what I have been arguing for in my last two chapters: the centrality of a kind of Blakean ‘double vision’ in Jones’s work. Chapter Four argues for the ability to ‘read’ the world from more than a literal point of view. Chapter Five discusses the way Jones represents virtual spaces for the imagination. However, the world of the imagination, of creativity, of enchantment, Jones argues, does not exist separately from our own but overlaps with it and is accessible from it. In this chapter, I will first demonstrate the way Jones represents physical spaces that resonate with echoes of the mythic and the sacred in works that are anchored in our own world. Then I will discuss Jones’s more conventional ‘secondary world’ fantasy, *The Dalemark Quartet*, where metafictional explorations of myth-making and history invite us once again to understand the importance of being able to negotiate both the ‘real’ world and the world of the imagination.

‘A small island of elsewhere’: Gardens

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the importance the ‘other garden’ has in Jones’s memories of her childhood, gardens of power feature in her work. The traveling court featured in *The Merlin Conspiracy* stays at a castle belonging to one of the villains, Sir James. There is an Inner Garden there, described by Roddy, sensitive to the nuances of nature magic, as ‘a garden inside a garden - cupped inside its own small valley and as old and as green as the hills’ It is larger than it looks; people are absorbed into it. Sybil, the chief instigator of the plot against the Merlin, undertakes a ritual there, and goes into a kind of frenzy. She doesn’t properly understand the power of the garden; Roddy recognizes the wrongness of Sybil’s behaviour: ‘It was a quiet place - you were supposed to *dwell* with the garden, that was it. You were supposed to let the garden come to you, not suck it up in a greedy riot like this. It was a small island of elsewhere and full of strength’.⁷

The garden at Chrestomanci Castle is ‘as old as the hills and stuffed with

⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Merlin Conspiracy* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p.

magic of every kind [...] Everything is stronger there'.⁸ When Cat and Janet try to go there, they have to approach it 'slantwise,' and they find themselves walking through all the seasons of the year to get to the heart of the garden. The garden's actual heart is a small bowl of meadowland containing one apple tree, with a spring of water at its roots, echoing the World Tree of Norse myth. Milly, Chrestomanci's wife, is a figure given some resemblance to a fertility goddess, and when, in a climactic moment, she enters the garden, the spring starts bubbling. When asked in an interview whether this garden has overtones of Christian symbolism, Jones reportedly laughed and cried 'Damn it, I'm turning into C.S. Lewis!' but she admitted that she knew she had been touching something deeper when writing the scene in the garden at the end of the book.⁹

In fact, the climactic scene of *Charmed Life* with its mob of 'hedge witches' and warlocks, who want to be free of the restrictions imposed by Chrestomanci, led by Cat's wicked witch sister Gwendoline, who intends to sacrifice Cat in order to gain his power, bears more than passing similarity to the scene of the sacrifice of Aslan in Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. There is a stone slab – as Ridge noted – at the foot of the tree, which the ringleaders of the mob intend to use to sacrifice Cat Chant. When Chrestomanci comes to rescue Cat, they take him prisoner, weakening him by tying him with silver chains. When they see him weakened, they laugh in triumph, very reminiscent of the scene when Aslan is brought to the sacrifice tied with ropes, while the mob jeers and pokes him with sticks. Chrestomanci sags in his chains as if he was tired, just as Aslan does. The similarity to Lewis may not have been deliberate (Jones says not, in the interview); it speaks, however, to the 'something deeper' that Jones remarked upon, and the similarity between the two works lends more of 'the awesome' to the scene.

There is something inherently numinous about an enclosed garden. If we apply the theories I discussed in my last chapter, a garden can function both as a heterotopia and as a chronotope: a heterotopia in that it is a real place, but one that

⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *Charmed Life* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1979), p. 164.

⁹ Judith Ridge, 'Interview with Diana Wynne Jones', 1992, available http://www.misrule.com.au/dwj92_6.html.

is at a slight remove from the 'real world' proper, a place where one can escape and where it is possible to feel a greater connection to the natural world while avoiding some of its dangers. As a chronotope, a 'garden' has immediate associations for almost anyone of any cultural or economic background. One does not need to be familiar with stories of the Garden of Eden, with the Garden of Adonis in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, or the medieval traditions of the *hortus inclusus* to conjure up a mental image of grass, flowers, and trees. The image of a walled garden, with a door that shuts out the outside world, has particular semiotic importance. For many readers, of course, it will conjure up *The Secret Garden*, though Jones denies the connection between that story, which she calls 'sentimental nonsense', and her own memories of the 'other' garden.¹⁰ Although both the novels thus far discussed are set in 'alternate' worlds, the garden brings something familiar to the 'other' world, and its enchantment lends the possibility of magic to our own. In any case, both Chrestomanci's home world and the world of Blest in *The Merlin Conspiracy* are clear analogues for a kind of ideal Englishness: a world of castles and ruins, burial mounds and gardens.

Enchanted Places

Catherine Butler has written at some length about the importance of place for Jones, and of identifiable landmarks and settings, such as Bristol, in her work. Butler reports that Jones did not usually like to tie things down to specific places in order to allow readers not familiar with them the freedom to imagine them and also not wishing to exclude in some sense readers who would not recognize the named landmarks.¹¹ Indeed, as Butler has noted, Jones's settings are impressionistic, her references to place associative in the same way as her allusions to other texts, filled

¹⁰ Jones, 'Answers to Some Questions', p. 75

¹¹ Catherine Butler, 'Enchanting Places: Readers and Pilgrimage in the Novels of Diana Wynne Jones,' 2014, Available https://www.academia.edu/8239993/Enchanting_Places_Readers_and_Pilgrimage_in_the_Novels_of_Diana_Wynne_Jones, p. 22.

with what a general reader might expect to meet in a typical English village or a typical English town, especially given the power of age and history.

In *Blest*, much of the magic is tied to the land and to its long history. Roddy has a vision and gains power in a ruined village:

It was like an accidental garden strewn with heaps of regularly piled stones. Small rowans and hawthorns had grown up among the stones, along with heather and gorse, big bushes of broom and small shrubs of bilberry. In between, there was every kind of wild flower, from foxgloves and poppies and yarrow, through buttercups, down to speedwell and tiny heartsease. I was particularly enchanted with some flowers like dark blue trumpets nestling in sunny spaces and by the drifts of frail, wiry harebells.¹²

When Roddy learns her magic, she discovers that all the magic she had learned at court was ‘small and one-sided and incomplete. The reality was huge - and all the things our teachers said were complicated were really quite simple. And the other way round’.¹³ Even the magic users in the world of *Blest* are affected with awe when they encounter strong magic of a kind unfamiliar to them. Heppy, Roddy’s grandmother, is a very powerful witch. Roddy writes that her magic ‘was nothing like any of the magic I had in my head. It was reverent magic, very old and very practised and it sent a shiver up my spine’.¹⁴ Nick encounters a magic place near a wood: ‘Whatever was inside that wood was very old, very strong, and – well – awesome. I simply could not bring myself to go near it’.¹⁵ When Roddy sees Stonehenge for the first time, she reports that ‘The sight of that compact ring of great stones, huge and small at once, and dense with strength... did strange things

¹² Diana Wynne Jones, *The Merlin Conspiracy* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 127.

¹³ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 134.

¹⁴ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 273.

¹⁵ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 342.

to the inside of my head'.¹⁶

Both Chrestomanci's home world and Blest are worlds where magic is real. The prequel to *The Merlin Conspiracy*, *Deep Secret*, is set, at least in part, in a clearly identified Bristol (the Babylon Hotel, which I discussed in my last chapter, is in the fictional town of Wantchester, although the hotel is reportedly based on the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool). Catherine Butler¹⁷ has drawn attention to the striking image of the vintage glass in Maree's Uncle's house, which 'waves and wobbles'.¹⁸ When you look out, Maree tells us, especially in the evening, 'you get a sort of cliff of trees and buildings [...] which all sort of slide about and ripple as if they are just going to transform into something else'. Maree adds, 'With everything rippling and stretching, you almost think you're seeing your way through to a potent strange place behind the city'.¹⁹ Indeed, Maree's cousin Nick and she invent an alternate Bristol, Bristolia, that overlaps with the mundane Bristol. This is a concept, as Butler has pointed out repeatedly, that pertains throughout Jones's work: she offers the *possibility* of enchantment, and suggests, over and over again, that we try to look beyond the obvious and find the marvellous that may lie behind it.

One of Jones's last works, *Enchanted Glass*, also set in our own world, has both glass and a garden. The garden is one where a giant can hide in plain sight. The house has a beautiful glass door with multi-coloured panes. The protagonist, Andrew, looks through the panes, and the colours change: 'rose-pink sunset, hushed and windless; a stormy orange garden, where it was suddenly autumn; a tropical green garden, where there seemed likely to be parrots and monkeys any second'.²⁰ Like the 'Bristolia' glass in *Deep Secret*, the glass has 'internal wrinkles and trapped bubbles' and the colours are 'both intense and misty at once'.²¹

¹⁶ Jones, *Merlin Conspiracy*, p. 355.

¹⁷ Butler, 'Enchanted Places', p. 4.

¹⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *Deep Secret* (New York: Tor, 1997), p. 81.

¹⁹ Jones, *Deep Secret*, p. 82.

²⁰ Jones, *Enchanted Glass* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), p. 17.

²¹ Jones, *Enchanted Glass*, p. 7.

Looking through them, like looking through the Bristolia glass, gives access to other worlds. Even more striking, Andrew wears glasses; Aidan, Andrew's young ward, notices that Andrew takes his glasses off when he wants to work magic, and Andrew considers this while making breakfast: 'Was it, Andrew mused, that bacon to the naked eye had the *possibility* of being enchanted? Would this make it the real world?'.²² Andrew may be able to see more clearly with his glasses on, but he blocks out the enchanted reality.

Although both *Deep Secret* and *Enchanted Glass* are set primarily in our world,²³ Jones matter-of-factly includes characters with magical powers; elsewhere in her work, perhaps most notably in *Fire and Hemlock* and *The Time of the Ghost*, the action revolves around characters with no magic, and the inclusion of magic in the plot is both subtle and explicitly connected with the imagination. I will write at length about *Fire and Hemlock* in my next chapter. I have already noted, of *The Time of the Ghost*, that the border there between reality and the magical is very lightly drawn. It might even be possible to dismiss the main character's experiences – being a 'ghost' – as a drug-induced nightmare resulting from both psychological and physical trauma. Indeed, there is a dreamlike, even nightmarish quality to many scenes in the book involving the 'ghost,' and, as I have mentioned earlier in this thesis, the tone of the book is the closest to horror that we find in Jones's novels. For example, there is a scene where the ghost drinks blood in order to talk and then, in the way of nightmares, isn't able to make herself understood. The ghost describes herself as being made of thoughts; this is reminiscent of a scene in a much earlier novel, *The Ogre Downstairs*, where one character turns invisible and finds himself incredibly angry. Jones wrote of that scene that it was meant to function like a dream. 'Books, like dreams,' she writes, 'let you have your experience and reject it too'.²⁴ She tells us that in the 'cloak of darkness' section of *The Ogre Downstairs* she wanted to make it clear that invisibility stands for

²² Jones, *Enchanted Glass*, p. 76.

²³ *Deep Secret* does take several side-trips to other worlds as well, and the Babylon Hotel, site of the SF convention, is in a fictional town.

²⁴ Jones, 'Creating the Experience,' p. 53.

thought: ‘thought is something no one can see, but it initiates most of the action’.²⁵ The ghost, in *Time of the Ghost*, is pure thought, but thought made confused both by physical and psychological trauma. There are gaps; at the very beginning of the story, the ghost doesn’t even realize which of the four sisters she is. Her confusion is also compounded by the fact that the timeline is vague: Sally, the sister who is the ghost, is in hospital as a young adult, but her ghost aspect visits events from her childhood.

The background to the main plot is to do with four sisters – loosely based on Jones herself and her two sisters – rather shockingly neglected by their parents but very close as a result. They have invented a game in which they bestow power on an old doll they call the Monigan and create rituals around her in the way of children who want to give themselves a little bit of a fright. Cart is the eldest daughter, the one who invented the game of the Monigan, and she takes it the most seriously. She is the analogue for Jones herself. Cart blames herself and her own imagination for creating something so dangerous: ‘We may call it Monigan and think it’s a game, but I don’t think it is. I know there really is a dark old female Something, and whatever it is we’ve woken it up and brought it stalking closer. And we mustn’t go on. It isn’t safe’.²⁶ When it seems that Sally, the ‘ghost’ of the title, is suffering in hospital as a result of the Monigan’s curse, Cart declares ‘The Monigan was just a stupid game! And I *curse* myself for inventing her - I curse my wretched imagination!’²⁷

A critical scene takes place somewhere that Cart calls the Back of Beyond. All the children are gathered there in the past for an encounter with the Monigan that has serious repercussions in the present. There are mounds, which Cart identifies as barrows, described in terms that echo the ‘barrow-downs’ scene in Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and Jones captures vividly the ‘awesome’ quality of the place, intensified by the point of view of Sally, the ghost:

²⁵ Jones, ‘Creating the Experience,’ p. 54

²⁶ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Time of the Ghost* (London: Beaver Books, 1984), p. 90.

²⁷ Jones, *The Time of the Ghost*, p. 105.

Because she was a ghost herself she saw the invisible shadow over the mounds. In the shadow flickered thin wreaths of thicker shadow, and from them came whispers and sad snatches of things that had once been important. Occasionally she caught a murky glimmer that could have been a crown. The heat and the stillness centered on that shadow and horrified her so that she clung close to the crowd of living people. Something of the same fear fell on them too.²⁸

The place Cart has chosen for Monigan's place is truly Monigan's place:

She felt Monigan, first of all, filling the hollow like a pond of dense gas. Then [...] she began to see things sliding and hanging and dissolving in the gas. These were the things which had been done in honour of Monigan. Dim blood flowed. An axe, and now a knife, glinted as it struck. Phantom mouths opened to scream. All these, and hundreds of others like them, melted and moved and reappeared as they went down the slope. Always there, melting and changing with the rest, were great wooden posts [...]. However they stood, the posts were where the victims of Monigan were put to be killed'.²⁹

As a ghost, Sally has crossed the border between the mundane and the enchanted, and Jones demonstrates in this instance that the enchanted – the awesome – is not always a safe or happy place. One of the powerful and quite sophisticated aspects of this novel is that Jones presents the Monigan not as something directly evil but as an amoral creature, a force of nature, a spirit from the past, one with the same 'chilly logic' that we see in Laurel, the Fairy Queen who steals power from young men in *Fire and Hemlock*. The impact in this case approaches horror – the book has some very frightening scenes – and the horror may be enhanced for the reader by familiarity both with the ancient rituals that are echoed here but also with the sacred places that Jones invokes.

²⁸ Jones, *The Time of the Ghost*, p. 162.

²⁹ Jones, *The Time of the Ghost*, pp. 164-65.

Metamyth: The Dalemark Quartet

Thus far, I have been concentrating on the way that Jones represents ‘the awesome,’ and the movement between mundane and enchanted in our world, or at least a close analogue of our world, such as Blest. One source, however, of a very detailed representation of these ideas, is in the Dalemark Quartet: a tetralogy set in a wholly alternate world (not in a multiverse), with a mythology and history of its own.

The Dalemark series – consisting of the ‘Dalemark Quartet’ proper and the novella, ‘The True State of Affairs’, was published between 1975 and 1995, with quite a long gap between the third in the quartet and the last, *The Crown of Dalemark*. In publishing order, they are *Cart and Cwiddler* (1975), *Drowned Ammet* (1977), *The Spellcoats* (1979), *The Crown of Dalemark* (1993), and ‘The True State of Affairs’ (1995). ‘The True State of Affairs’ was written much earlier than the rest; in her introduction to one of the collections in which it was published, *Minor Arcana*, Jones mentions that she sent it to an agent in the mid-sixties, and it is clear that the world in which it is set is not fully developed, as I have written in Chapter Four. There, I discussed ‘The True State of Affairs’ as a study in a character unable to reconcile the balance between the concrete and the abstract that Jones demonstrates throughout her work to be so important. Emily, the protagonist of the novella, fails, and her story is ultimately a tragedy. The characters in the series proper succeed where she does not; they learn to navigate the two worlds: the practical, political world and the world of the sacred and of the imagination. The series is thematically and narratively complex, with many potential areas of discussion; I will focus here on the way Jones uses the opportunity to explore aspects of historiography and myth-making. She does not invoke any familiar myth from our own canon, but rather invents her own. There is a dialogic and intertextual relationship between all the works in the series.

The series’ internal chronology is slightly different from its publishing order: *The Spellcoats* takes place in prehistoric times, *Cart and Cwiddler* and *Drowned Ammet* in a time immediately before the historical reunification of North and

South of Dalemark. *The Crown of Dalemark* is in part set two hundred years later. One character from that time travels back two hundred years to the main timeline of the others. 'The True State of Affairs' seems to be set in a time perhaps a little earlier than *Cart and Cwiddler*, though this is not entirely clear.

In order of internal chronology, then, *The Spellcoats* tells, through first-person narration, the story of the family of Closti the Clam. They are something of outsiders in their village, both physically – they are fair and have blond wavy hair that resembles that of the people of the South – and in their customs; the villagers believe that the River is a god, whereas the family believe in the Undying, which at first appear to be something like household gods, little statues that the family carries with them. One of the subtle points that Jones makes in the course of the story is that both beliefs are true. When their land is threatened by invaders, the villagers turn on the family, and they are forced to travel down the river, where they discover that a greater threat comes from the evil enchanter Kankredin. Tanaqui, the narrator, is a weaver, and makes the titular Spellcoats that have the family's story woven into them. Tanaqui's story is clearly metafictional: through her weaving, she not only comes to understand her own place in the events swirling around her but also discovers her identity as one of the family of Undying and her ability not just to record events but to bring them about through her weaving.

Cart and Cwiddler tells the story of another family, that of Clennen the travelling musician. It is a limited third-person narrative, from the point of view of the youngest son, Moril, and another instance of the way Jones enacts reading and misreading of events unfolding through the gradually expanding understanding of the focal character. Clennen and his family travel up and down Dalemark, crossing the border between North and South, and, after Clennen has been murdered, it becomes clear that he had been acting as a spy and a courier for the North. One of his last actions is to help Kialan, the son of the most powerful Northern Earl, escape from the South. On his deathbed, Clennen gives Moril the cwiddler that he claims belonged to Osfameron, one of the Undying. Moril learns to control the magic of the cwiddler and begins to understand his own power as a storyteller and as a musician.

Drowned Ammet is written in a very tightly controlled alternating third

person point-of-view, switching sometimes even in the same paragraph between Mitt, the poor son of a revolutionary in South Dalemark, who himself becomes a freedom fighter, and Hildy, a daughter of one of the ruling families. When the ruling Earl is killed, Mitt is implicated in his death, but Hildy and her brother Ynen, for complicated reasons, also have to run away. Mitt becomes their reluctant ally, and they escape together by boat to the Holy Islands and ultimately to the North.

The Crown of Dalemark opens shortly after *Drowned Ammet* ends; Hildy, Ynen and Matt, along with Hildy and Ynen's father Navis, have taken refuge in the North. Hildy has been sent to school, and Mitt has been put in the service of the Countess of Aberath, where he is taught to read and learns other courtly skills. As the book opens, rumours have arisen about a young woman called Noreth, who is making a claim to the Crown on the basis of her assertion that her father is the One (the first of the Undying). The Countess and Keril, the Earl of Hannart, hope to exploit what they know of Mitt's background as a revolutionary, and force him to agree to kill Noreth. First, though, he must join her as she makes a procession along the Greenway, an ancient road that traverses Dalemark. He is joined by, among others, Hildy's father Navis, and Moril the musician from *Cart and Cwiddier*, who wants to see Noreth take the throne. The focus then switches two-hundred years into their future, where we meet Maewen arriving to spend a holiday with her father, who is a historian living in the capital city, perhaps even one of the historians whose dry voice constitutes the framing from the future that ends *The Spellcoats*. Maewen learns that she closely resembles Noreth, who had disappeared somewhere on her journey, and she is in fact transported to Mitt's time, where she unwillingly takes Noreth's place. The company travels the Greenway, searching for a Cup, a Sword, and a Stone that will prove 'Noreth's' claim to the throne. We learn that the real Noreth was being manipulated by the spirit of Kankredin, the evil power from *The Spellcoats*, who had been dissipated but not destroyed, and that Noreth has in actuality been murdered. Ultimately, it is Mitt who earns the right to become King; he takes the name Amil, one of the names of the One, and becomes the king known to Maewen in history as Amil the Great. He also vows to seek out and destroy any surviving remnants of Kankredin. Maewen is thrust back into her own time and she helps root out a Kankredin remnant there.

Dalemark is a world that both does and does not resemble ours. The world-building is somewhat impressionistic. The geography is vague: the North is cold and mountainous, and there is a famous waterfall near one city; the South is warm enough to grow wine grapes but also includes a group of ‘Holy Islands’ whose peat and wood-smoke might suggest the Hebrides or perhaps Ireland. We know that the landscape shifts over time: the great river that is central to the action in *The Spellcoats* has dwindled to a trickle by the time of the later books, and supernatural events cause the opening or closing of mountain passes.

As is typical of her narrative technique, Jones builds the history and mythology of Dalemark through snippets and glancing references over the course of the series. One needs to have read and reread them all to piece together the relationships between characters and the sequence of events. This non-linearity would be even more pronounced, it must be added, were the series to be read in publication order, as was, reportedly, Jones’s preference, especially given the space of years between them. Names shift along with the places, and, adding to the confusion, are often very similar, as in the multiple variations on the Undying name Alhammet. However, as Farah Mendlesohn notes, the books ‘speak to each other’,³⁰ and there is an underlying coherence that is built by Jones’s allusive and dialogic narrative technique.

Mitt, the character whose dramatic arc arguably forms the backbone of *Drowned Ammet* and *The Crown of Dalemark*, responds early in *Drowned Ammet* to much the same sense of ‘the awesome’ that I have been discussing so far in this chapter. As a very small child, he wandered away from his home in search of a vision of a perfect land. It came to him through smell, though ‘Mitt was too young to think of it as smells [...] he thought it was a place. It seemed to him that he had got an inkling of somewhere unspeakably beautiful, warm and peaceful’.³¹ Later, ‘When an inkling of it came to him in silence, or in scents, or, later, if the wind hummed a certain note, or a storm came shouting in from the sea and he caught

³⁰ Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children’s Literature and the Fantastic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 110.

³¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *Drowned Ammet* (London: Mammoth, 1993), p. 6.

the same note in the midst of its noise, he thought of his lost perfect place and felt for a moment as if his heart would break'.³² This is a recurring image, and we see him encountering the same combination of scents at significant points in his life's journey: when he reaches the Holy Islands in *Drowned Ammet*, when he finds Cennoreth's house on the Paths of the Undying in *The Crown of Dalemark*, and again when he encounters the One in the place which is to become his capital city when he becomes king.

The details of these encounters are strikingly similar to two passages from C.S. Lewis's autobiographical/allegorical work, *The Pilgrim's Regress*. In the section titled 'The Island' (which itself invites comparison with the Holy Islands Mitt travels to) the protagonist, John, sees a wall, in which there is a window:

Through it he saw a green wood full of primroses: and he remembered suddenly how he had gone into another wood to pull primroses, as a child, very long ago – so long that even in the moment of remembering the memory seemed still out of reach. While he strained to grasp it, there came to him from beyond the wood a sweetness and a pang so piercing that instantly he forgot his father's house, and his mother, and the fear of the Landlord, and the burden of the rules. All the furniture of his mind was taken away. A moment later he found that he was sobbing, and the sun had gone in: and what it was that had happened to him he could not quite remember, nor whether it had happened in this wood, or in the other wood when he was a child. ³³

In the preface to the revised edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis writes about what he calls 'Romanticism': a feeling of intense longing. It is a sense of unsatisfied desire, an 'unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of a bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well at*

³² Jones, *Drowned Ammet*, p. 13.

³³ C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1933, 1943), pp. 24-25.

the World's End, the opening lines of *Kubla Khan*, the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves'.³⁴ This is the experience of what Jones calls 'the awesome': a response to beauty, to the unknown, to the numinous.

The Undying in Dalemark are not gods, exactly – indeed, we learn that people bound them as gods by making images of them – but they are beings of great power who have very long lives and are able to cross the threshold between this world and the enchanted one: Jones's own 'Other Garden,' or Mitt's image of a perfect land. An ability to reconcile these two sides of experience – the practical and the imaginative – is what gives the Undying their power but can also give power to those who create or invent. The Undying themselves have multiple aspects that reflect on the one hand this dichotomy between the mundane and the magical and on the other the rich, allusive way Jones uses mythical and other intertextual references throughout her work; in *Drowned Ammet*, Mitt is told that 'The great ones contain multitudes',³⁵ surely a Whitman allusion, one which underlines the connection with creativity. Later, he is given names of power for both 'Old Ammet' and 'Libby Beer'. He sees the names inscribed on a stone wall and realizes that there are two for each of the Undying: 'the top name in each pair was the lesser name and went with the usual figures of Old Ammet and Libby Beer, made of corn and berries [...] the names below were the strong ones, and went with Old Ammet and Libby Beer as they really were'.³⁶ The Undying have different names in different contexts: in *The Crown of Dalemark*, the Undying who is known in the mundane world as Wend has the names 'Tanamoril, Osfameron, Oril, Wend, Mage Mallard'. As his sister, whom we have met in the series both as Tanaqui, the narrator of *The Spellcoats*, and as the Witch Cennoreth, says, 'when a person lives a long time, names tend to pile up'.³⁷ As I demonstrated in my discussion of *Hexwood* in Chapter Two, this concept is central to the way Jones uses intertextual allusions, whether of myth, fairy stories or literary works. Like the figures of the

³⁴ Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, p. 10.

³⁵ Jones, *Drowned Ammet*, p.283.

³⁶ Jones, *Drowned Ammet*, p. 296.

³⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Crown of Dalemark* (London: Mandarin, 1993), p. 285.

Undying, such references ‘contain multitudes’. The world of Jones’s ‘other garden,’ of ‘the awesome,’ can also be described as the world of story and of the imagination.

This world can be accessed in Dalemark through ritual, by travelling the ‘paths of the Undying,’ or through certain creative acts. Early in *Drowned Ammet*, Mitt and Hildy participate in an annual ritual in which figures of ‘Old Ammet’ and ‘Libby Beer’ are cast into the sea in order to bring luck and safety for fishermen. Neither at this point in the story really believes in the Undying or the ritual, but they listen as words are repeated by a ‘growling, ragged chorus’:

To tide swimming and water welling, go now and come back sevenfold.
Over the sea they went, on the wind’s road. Go now and come back
sevenfold [...]. Yet by the third repetition, Hildy’s arms were up in goose
pimples from sheer awe – she did not know why. Mitt’s eyes pricked, as
they always did, and he was annoyed with himself for being so impressed by
a load of out-of-date nonsense.³⁸

In *Crown of Dalemark*, Moril is playing his cwidder at the midsummer feast, playing the song ‘Undying at Midsummer’. Listening, Mitt hears a ‘queer humming’ under the notes, which readers familiar with *Cart and Cwidder* will know is the cwidder’s magic at work. ‘A great wavering shadow advanced across the floor and grew up the wall beyond’.³⁹ Mitt asks the Countess’s husband, Alk, whether he believes in the One. Alk says, ‘I believed in my machines when they were just a notion in my head, and nothing I could touch or see. Who’s to say that the One isn’t as real as they were in my head – or as real as they are now?’⁴⁰ Later, Alk tells Mitt he’s seen the One: ‘And – well – it’s like coming into a shadow all of a sudden, or the shadow coming into you’.⁴¹

³⁸ Jones, *Drowned Ammet*, p. 100.

³⁹ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 51-52.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 146.

It is possible to see or have encounters with the Undying along one of the roads, or ways, known as ‘the Paths of the Undying’. These are The Greenway, the ancient River, and the ‘Wind Road,’ or the ocean. Maewen also realizes, in *The Crown of Dalemark*, that the railway in her time covers much of the Greenway. All these are thresholds, borderlands, where it is possible to cross from the mundane world into the world of enchantment, or story. As I have discussed in my last chapter, Alice Jenkins equates the train journey at the opening of *The Crown of Dalemark*, where Maewen encounters two of the Undying – Wend and the evil Kankredin - with Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia.⁴² It is important to note, as we have seen already, that the way Jones uses these liminal spaces - the Greenway, the ‘wind’s road’ and so on – is expressive of the sense of timelessness and the numinous that such places, or similar ones, have in real life. At one point in *The Crown of Dalemark*, Mitt looks out at the Greenway and has a vision of past and future spread out in front of him:

it did not surprise him that the green roads were winding away into the past. He lay and marvelled at the way they turned back and forth through history, up to the present, into the place where he lay in such danger, and then went winding and snaking on into the far future. The Undying went walking, taking the roads through time, and history went with them, ignoring them, forgetting the Undying were making history. He watched the roads snake out again into the South, and battles, and other strange things’.⁴³

Earlier, Mitt and Moril inadvertently use the power of the cwidder and find themselves in the One’s river, which no longer exists in their time, but which, in *The Spellcoats*, is explicitly equated with the One himself. They are, Moril explains,

⁴² Alice Jenkins, ‘Getting to Utopia: Railways and Heterotopia in Children’s Literature’, *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, Eds Carrie Hintz and Elaine Ostry (London: Routledge, 2013), pp.23-37 (p. 29).

⁴³ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 256.

‘in the place in the stories where the One really is, I *think*. It’s hard to explain, but the other world the cwidder moves in is the place where the stories are’.⁴⁴

Moril’s cwidder, which his father has told him once belonged to the Undying Osfameron, has inscribed on the front ‘I move in more than one world’. Moril discovers gradually that it is possible to harness the power of the cwidder by combining story and reality in his mind. In a scene near the end of *Cart and Cwidder*, Kialan asks Moril if his dreams are coming true, and Moril realizes that Kialan has just told him how the cwidder worked. He remembers a scene from some time before; Clennen had been telling one of the stories of the Adon, and Moril looked up to see Kialan in the audience. Moril had been annoyed because he thought of Kialan as part of dreary everyday life, interrupting the imaginary world of the story ‘and he had felt as if he had a foot in two worlds which were spinning apart from one another. Yet, Kialan [as the heir of Hannart] *was* the Adon – or *an* Adon – the whole time’. He realizes that in his dreams of Hannart he had never imagined it raining, and that kind of dream was not true. ‘There were true dreams, but they had to be part of life as well, just as life, to be good, had to embody dreams, or a good song had to have an idea to it’.⁴⁵

Several stories and songs weave their way through the series, and just as the names of the Undying shift depending on context and circumstance, there is a sense that at any time any of the characters can assume the role of one of the legendary figures. In *The Crown of Dalemark*, Moril, speaking about Noreth (or the girl they think is Noreth) declares ‘She *must* be queen! It’s like the old stories, like Enblith and Tanamoril. I want to help her. I know the old things are still true’. Mitt replies that he himself is very dull and political. ‘Moril laughed. “So you ride off in the night, like an old story, to steal her the Adon’s ring”’.⁴⁶ Clennen proclaims, at the beginning of *Cart and Cwidder*, that there will not be kings in Dalemark ‘until the sons of Manaliabrid return,’ yet there is a sense in which they are *all* sons of Manaliabrid. Although the series culminates in a quest for a crown, there is no

⁴⁴ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 175.

⁴⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *Cart and Cwidder* (Harmondsworth, Puffin, 1978), p. 154.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Crown of Dalemark*, p. 171.

‘chosen one’ with a destiny. Rather, it is a case of who is willing and who is able to ask or respond to the right questions. Each of the characters is an individual; each has the capacity to take on heroic attributes.

As is so often the case in Jones’s work, characters in the series mature into their roles and assume personal agency, whether that is magical, creative, or political, through self-discovery. As is also often true in her work, power comes through imagination and creativity; there is no fixed or destined ‘right’ way to do things. Power comes through writing, through playing an instrument, or through speaking. When he is a child, Mitt learns to call himself a ‘free soul who doesn’t know what fear is,’ and he becomes one, to a certain extent. He is handicapped, however, by the fact that he is putting himself in the wrong role. He misunderstands the motives of the people around him; his process of maturation and self-knowledge comes through learning to ‘read’ himself as much as other people. Late in *Drowned Ammet*, Mitt explains to Libby Beer, ‘I went through life thinking I was on the right side – one of the good ones, you know – and now I can see I’m as bad as Al’.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Mitt becomes king because he has learned to keep a cool head, to read people and situations clearly.

The individual character arcs are important in the Dalemark series and can be read as standard ‘coming of age’ narratives, but perhaps a more important theme of the series as a whole is story-telling, myth-making and historiography. Although all the novels in the series comment on the way societies tell stories about heroes and demonstrate how the mundane and the ‘story’ world can overlap, *The Spellcoats* is the most overtly metafictional: Tanaqui, the narrator, writes her own story by weaving it into the coats and comes to understand and interpret events by rereading her own weaving. Like Mitt, she talks herself into a certain kind of agency: she pretends she is a fierce and warlike person who would lead them to war against the Heathen. She tells her story to the Undying ‘to make it seem more true’,⁴⁸ but later wishes she hadn’t because she fears that she brought the troubles down on them. Perhaps because they live in a simpler, less ‘historic’ time, Tanaqui

⁴⁷ Jones, *Drowned Ammet*, p. 228.

⁴⁸ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Spellcoats* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 7.

and her brothers and sisters accept almost instinctively the powers of the Undying. Their lives are closer to the ‘story space’. Tanaqui’s brother Hern doesn’t believe in the Undying because they’re not reasonable, but he still keeps his vow to them. Duck (the character who will become Wend later in the series) says ‘you don’t have to believe in things because they’re reasonable’.⁴⁹

There are two spellcoats; in the second, Tanaqui is retelling or reinterpreting what she has learned, and by this time has come to understand her own identity as one of the Undying. She learns, in her weaving, to bring together the two worlds of experience and of imagination. In a central episode of the story, the family meet Tanamil, also one of the Undying, although at the time Tanaqui did not fully understand who he was. Tanaqui has been having a dream ever since she started weaving, where her mother (whom she believes to be dead) calls to her: ‘Wake up, Tanaqui. Wake up and think’.⁵⁰ She loses track of what happened in the time they spend with Tanamil, ‘But by thinking and thinking and discussing it with Duck, I have remembered it better – though I’m not sure we have it in the right order’.⁵¹ Duck says the trouble with her is that she always has to have everything in the right order; the implication is that the story contains a truth, but the details and the order in which you tell them are not important. When Duck and she argue about when a certain conversation took place, she tells him she remembers it one way, and she’s the one telling the story.⁵² She does not, however, come to full understanding until she has not only woven her story but also read it. She is a weaver, but she is also The Weaver, and with her power as a storyteller she is able not only to record her story but to influence events.

Jones, then, takes a figure from Dalemark mythology and brings it to life, at the same time making a powerful comment about the importance of reading and writing. It is jarring when, at the end of *The Spellcoats*, a narrative in the fully realized and very human voice of an individual, we get an epilogue in the stuffy,

⁴⁹ Jones, *The Spellcoats*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Jones, *The Spellcoats*, p. 69.

⁵¹ Jones, *The Spellcoats*, p. 80.

⁵² Jones, *The Spellcoats*, p. 86.

somewhat pedantic voice of an archaeologist or historian, describing how the excavated spell coats have been translated and trying to identify the characters in the story:

The Weaver herself has been identified with the Lake Lady, the Fates, and with the Southern cult-figure of Libby Beer, but not satisfactorily. The witch Cennoreth is the most likely possibility. She is frequently called the Weaver of Spells.⁵³

It is as if the vibrant, fully realized character we have come to know has suddenly become flat, just a two-dimensional ‘figure’ from mythology. We have lost her context, her ‘truth’. Because we have travelled in her story world in our own imaginations, we as readers ‘know’ more than the historians interpreting the story.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Kathryn Hume draws attention to the concept of individuation, which she believes occurs only after the Renaissance. The concept of the individual, so important in our world, was far less important to writers of the Middle Ages or earlier. We never get a chance, she argues, to see Beowulf or the Arthurian knights being hung over or expressing much other than fairly elemental emotions.⁵⁴ Modern fantasy allows us the opportunity to explore characters within a known ‘story space’ setting, to bring individuation to characters who would otherwise only act out roles. However, there is a type of novel, like Mary Renault’s Theseus books, or Mary Stewart’s Merlin series, where the ‘mythic’ character is given a historical reality. We can relate to them as focalizing characters. *The Spellcoats* is in a sense Jones playing with this concept in regard to ‘mythic’ characters in Dalemark, since the viewpoint character, Tanaqui, seems to be ‘only’ a young woman but discovers, as we do along with her, that she is one of the Undying.

The Dalemark series is unique in Jones’s novels in that she is working within

⁵³ Jones, *The Spellcoats*, p. 278.

⁵⁴ Katherine Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Response to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen, 1984), Kindle Edition, loc. 843.

a ‘created world’, separate from our own, not part of a multiverse, and, as we have seen, is as much preoccupied with liminal spaces, borderlands, the places where real and enchanted overlap within that world as she is in works set at least in part in our own world. Brian Attebery’s comment, cited at the beginning of this chapter, that such stories are both fantasy and metafantasy, and highlight the ‘textual’ nature of myth, is true in one respect, but also misleading in another. Indeed, Jones is highlighting the notion that stories are ‘stories’. In Jones’s world, however, this does not mean that they are not ‘true’, nor, as Rosemary Jackson suggested, that they cannot offer something in the way of the transcendental, even without lapsing into nostalgia for a lost past or trying to escape into a ‘better’ world than this. Jones’s created world, Dalemark, is not perfect; her heroes are not special ‘chosen ones’, just human beings who can be grumpy, irascible, argumentative, bossy, and annoying. By showing us in the series the way myth leads to and from real, lived experience, Jones offers us the opportunity to apply those principles in our own world, and indeed represents those ideas persistently throughout her work.

Jones, then, gives us entry to the world of the imagination, just as she does her characters. She writes about how she wants her work to give readers an ‘experience,’ and that experience is there for those who are open to it. She offers readers the opportunity, through her work, and especially through the active, creative imagination, to traverse that liminal borderland between the mundane and ‘the awesome,’ to enter the ‘Other Garden’. Diana Wynne Jones offers us enchantment. In a passage that echoes most strikingly both Mitt’s experience of a ‘perfect land’ or that of C.S. Lewis’s pilgrim John, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote in ‘On Fairy Stories’ that enchantment gives joy: ‘when the sudden “turn” comes we get a piercing glimpse of joy, and heart’s desire, that for a moment passes outside the frame, rends indeed the very web of story, and lets a gleam come through’.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘On Fairy Stories’, in *The Monster and the Critics and Other Essays*, Ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 109-61 (p. 154).

Chapter Seven: The Sacrificial Hero

Introduction

Thus far, my chapters have been loosely organized around various ‘types’ of intertextuality, such as allusion, word play or parody, or theoretical concepts such as Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism and the chronotope, or Foucault’s heterotopia. Throughout, though, I have tried to demonstrate that these intertextual modes and the specific intertextual allusions generated can be read symbolically and are used in Diana Wynne Jones’s work to enhance or highlight certain themes. I have also emphasized a ‘Blakean’ double vision that can be found throughout Jones’s work. The straightforward narrative of a story and the more symbolic intertextual mode that lies behind it can be seen to echo the mundane world and the world of enchantment, respectively. One is accessible from and to the other in both Jones’s literary technique and in the stories she tells.

Richard Burrow, one of Jones’s sons, spoke at her funeral of a ‘yearning or elegiac quality’ that can be found in what he names as his mother’s best books - *Fire and Hemlock*, *Hexwood*, and *The Homeward Bounders* - and a sense of loss that one can find at their heart. This, he attributes at least in part to the pain of her upbringing.¹ Certainly, as we have seen, a persistent thread throughout Jones’s work is a fight against tyranny and a concomitant loss of self-worth, whether the protagonist suffers hardship at the hands of uncaring and neglectful parents, such as may have been the case in Jones’s own life, oppression by malignant powers or direct psychological pressure, or simply mental stagnation caused by the protagonist’s own unthinking adherence to arbitrary societal or family ‘rules’. In the world as Jones depicts it, both creativity and heroic achievement come at the price of suffering and loss, and the suffering is often at the hands of those who would latch on to the abilities and powers of others, making use of others’ discoveries or creative powers for their own ends. To earn their places as heroes in

¹‘Address at Diana’s Funeral,’ in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp.352-54 (p. 353).

Jones's novels, protagonists must break free from tyranny and find their own path.

Fire and Hemlock, *Hexwood*, and *The Homeward Bounders* all have significant intertextual underpinnings. I will use my discussion of these three novels to demonstrate all that I have been arguing about Jones's use of intertextuality, showing how in each case the intertextual allusions are used figuratively to enhance certain themes. All three novels, in different ways, portray the necessity for a true hero to suffer, and to sacrifice himself, but also that the heroism can be found in the everyday as well as in the enchanted worlds. Jones has outlined this notion of heroism in her non-fiction writing, but her discussion is largely in connection with *Fire and Hemlock*; I will expand that and present a comparative study of the three works after exploring briefly the way Jones represents the connection between power and pain in her novels as a whole. All three of her 'great' novels explore the nature of reality through a core of Platonic idealism, and all three depict heroes whose personal sacrifice enables them to free themselves from tyranny, either literal or spiritual.

Power and Pain

In one of her essays about writing, Jones discusses the origin of the word 'protagonist', referring to the root word *agon* meaning suffering but also action: 'what an audience, or a readership, expects from a hero is a very serious form of a game, in which the hero is expected to struggle on two fronts, externally with an actual evil and internally with his/her own doubts and shortcomings'.² Jones does not shrink from depicting the pain of such struggles, where often – indeed more often than not – psychological damage caused by abuse or manipulation can be as harmful as physical pain.

Equally, Jones makes it clear in her work that any power comes at a cost, and also that nothing is straight-forwardly 'good' or 'evil'. In *The Merlin Conspiracy*, narrator Roddy's Welsh grandfather is revealed to be a Power, in fact,

² Diana Wynne Jones, 'A Whirlwind Tour of Australia,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 142-195 (p. 150).

the Lord of the Dead, who at one point in the novel leads a type of ‘wild hunt’. He tells Roddy, ‘Power and pain go together [...] And every fine kindly thing is incomplete without a side that is less than pleasant’.³ In Jones's earlier novel, *Dogsbody*, Sirius, the dog star who has been sent to earth in the shape of a dog, also participates in a wild hunt, led by a figure who seems to be a composite of Herne the Hunter and Actaeon (among others, as we have seen), who leads him on an ecstatic and terrifying chase. Sirius follows the shape and ‘began to hate it with a sort of tender terror’.⁴ As they run, it seems to Sirius that the Master of the Hunt and quarry are one and the same, and he feels an urge to help the quarry, with ‘a peculiar fierce pity’.⁵ When, at the climax of the novel, Sirius’s dog body dies, and Kathleen, the girl who has loved and cared for Sirius in his dog shape, doesn’t want to talk to him in his star form, Sirius ‘glimpsed a little of the meaning behind the wild hunt. He had been cruel to Kathleen while he thought he was being kind’.⁶ He had given himself to her to love, but had not thought through the potential loss to her when he regained his own shape. Hayley, the protagonist of *The Game*, also encounters Actaeon, the young hunter who is torn to pieces by his own hounds, when she visits the ‘mythosphere,’ the virtual space that connects and enacts all myths and stories and is moved to try and bring about a positive conclusion for his story. Thinking about the mythosphere itself fills Hayley with ‘a great sad longing’.⁷ Her Grandfather gives Hayley books to read that again reflect the notion of pain and beauty. For example, in one of them, *At the Back of the North Wind*, Wind shows Diamond stories, but not all are pleasant; at one point, Wind has to sink a ship.

In two novels of Jones's ‘Chrestomanci’ series, *Charmed Life* and its prequel, *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, the respective protagonists, Cat and Christopher

³ Jones, *The Merlin Conspiracy* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 142.

⁴ Jones, *Dogsbody* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1975), p. 175.

⁵ Jones, *Dogsbody*, p. 176.

⁶ Jones, *Dogsbody*, p. 195.

⁷ Jones, *The Game* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 26.

Chant, undergo a journey of self-discovery in which they not only come to terms with their own inherent powers but also break free from the malignant influence of family members who exploit them. Cat Chant has known from infancy that his sister Gwendolyn is a powerful witch, and that she has expectations that she is born to greatness. What he does not learn until it is almost too late for him is that, contrary to his own beliefs, he himself is a very powerful nine-lived enchanter whose power Gwendolyn has been stealing to enhance her own. He is so convinced of his own ordinariness that he is unable to see what is happening, which results in Chrestomanci, his guardian, suspecting that Cat is aligned with Gwendolyn because he does nothing to stop her from using what, to Chrestomanci, are obviously very strong magic powers. In the end, Gwendolyn comes close to killing Cat in order to take all his power before he achieves the inward resolution to accept and take control of his own abilities.

Similarly, Christopher Chant, who will grow up to become the Chrestomanci of the earlier novel, and who is Cat's second cousin, is exploited by his grasping uncle, who uses Christopher's powers for his own selfish ends. His parents are neglectful, and his uncle, discovering Christopher's ability to pass easily between worlds, uses Christopher as a courier for smuggling magical contraband. Although he knows he can travel between worlds, Christopher does not understand the full extent of his powers until he starts losing lives, at which point it is discovered that he is a nine-lived enchanter and is destined to become the Chrestomanci when he grows up. Although Christopher's situation is similar to Cat's, Jones provides greater psychological depth to Christopher's moral dilemma. He feels that his life has been decided for him by either his parents or by Gabriel Witt, the enchanter currently in the role of the Chrestomanci, and who takes over Christopher's education. His only freedom, as he sees it, comes when he travels between worlds, and he takes pleasure in the praise he gets from his uncle for the errands he completes. He doesn't allow himself to see the harm that he is doing through his errands, killing a mother dragon in order to get dragon blood and transporting the severed tails (in 'fishy smelling' bundles) of the mermaids who had befriended him. He also fails to recognize that the distant politeness he adopts as a way to hide his own confusion and anger with the way he is treated is perceived by others as

extreme rudeness and further isolates him from those of good will who might have helped him. Jones notes that once he has come to terms with himself and is ready to fight back against those who have exploited him, Christopher has to fight twice. 'Once he knows he has to, he can defeat his uncle quite easily in physical terms, but before that he has to cope with what has been done to him internally, by uncle and governess and parents'.⁸

Both the Chants literally pass through death in order to recognize their powers, and both have to fight against a kind of moral stagnation or apathy brought on by the abuse they suffer at the hands of those who should have helped them. We see a similar pattern in *Black Maria*, which I have discussed previously in the context of its portrait of a village ruled by a tyrannical old lady who has raised passive aggression to a fine art with the help of some magic. Although published six years later, *Black Maria* was written before *Fire and Hemlock*,⁹ and, in retrospect, it is possible to see Jones experimenting with some of the same themes and ideas that are more fully realized in that novel, as we shall see. Aunt Maria keeps her family and everyone in the village in thrall, but just as the individuals Cat and Christopher Chant to a certain extent acquiesce in the misuse of their powers and have to rouse themselves in order to seize control, so does it appear that the villagers of Cranbury also cooperate in their own submission. As we have seen, the village is divided sharply down gender lines, with one woman playing the role of Queen of the women and one man chosen to be King, with his power lying in a mysterious green box. Antony Green held the box, but Aunt Maria's daughter manipulated him through his infatuation with her and imprisoned him under the earth, stealing the box. With Antony Green missing, Aunt Maria is able to control both men and women. At the opening of the novel, the young narrator Mig's father has apparently died when his car went off the road into the sea when he was on his way to visit his aunt by marriage, Aunt Maria. It turns out that he is not actually dead, although he may have in fact passed through some kind of magical death and

⁸ Jones, 'A Whirlwind Tour of Australia,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 142-195, p. 152.

⁹ Jones, 'A Whirlwind Tour', p. 147.

rebirth.

In fact, Aunt Maria intended Mig's father to be the 'king' of the town, giving him the power of the box. She tells Mig 'I'm sure you understand now that he had to pass through death so that he could use the funny little box properly'.¹⁰ By this time, Mig has released Antony Green, the proper owner of the box, from under the earth, and she realizes that Antony Green has been through death as well. Aunt Maria had planned to appoint Mig her successor, after she turned her own daughter into a wolf for daring to oppose her. Mig herself passes through a kind of death, first losing her father and all her familiar surroundings, being taken to live with the dreadful Aunt Maria, and later, when she stands up to Aunt Maria, being deposited along with zombie-like children in the village orphanage, where she has to withstand the psychological oppression of one of Aunt Maria's henchwomen.

But Mig has power of her own, her imagination. She is a writer, and through narrating the story, writing down her experiences as they happen and elaborating on them afterwards, she is able to empower herself and make sense of what has been happening. Aunt Maria and her gang of women try to smother Mig and to subsume her spirit and her imagination, but she resists. In the climactic scene, where Antony Green tries to confront the villagers with the wrongs they have done, Mig notes 'I even saw myself, rather to my surprise. I suppose Antony Green was trying to show me being got at by Aunt Maria, but he had done me like that picture in the book Hester Bayley gave me, as a girl being pushed and pulled underground by horrible shadows'.¹¹ As Jones writes in her own discussion of this novel, Mig 'has to overcome real terror *and* the sort of intellectual sloth induced by the role Aunt Maria has thrust upon her'.¹² By restoring Antony Green to the village, Mig assumes and enhances her own power; Jones writes that Antony Green is 'more even than the sleeping buried part of Mig herself: he is the buried part of the whole community, their life of the imagination, without which no one's intelligence can

¹⁰ Jones, *Black Maria* (London: Methuen, 1991), p. 182.

¹¹ Jones, *Black Maria*, p. 194.

¹² Jones, 'Whirlwind Tour', p. 155.

work well enough to see through Aunt Maria's moral miasma'.¹³

'The only way to win is to lose': *Fire and Hemlock*

Black Maria, then, depicts a selfish and grasping, magically powerful and psychically domineering woman leaching the creative energy and indeed lives out of her family and community, and a conflict between mental stagnation, along with a kind of parasitic possessiveness in human relationships, and the impulse for creative freedom and unselfish love. Jones returns to these concepts but with much greater sophistication, in *Fire and Hemlock*. The title describes the essential conflict: the fire is the creative fire of the imagination, a recurring image in Jones's work, and the hemlock, the mental and spiritual miasma such as we've seen experienced by the villagers in *Black Maria*. Jones writes that Polly, the main protagonist, takes a heroic journey from Nothing to Nowhere: 'the Nothing of spiritual death (Hemlock in my book), toward the fire which is imagination and redemption - the Nowhere of my book'.¹⁴

On the surface, *Fire and Hemlock* is one of many variations of the Tam Lin ballad, in which a brave young woman, usually called Janet but here named Polly, rescues her lover, who has been captured by the fairies. It overlaps, as well, with the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, where a young musician has a spell laid on him by the Queen of the Fairies that forces him only to tell the truth. In the original legend of Tam Lin, Janet rescues Tam by picking him out of a procession of riders, pulling him from his horse, and then holding on to him with all her strength while he changes shape. When he returns to his own shape, Janet and he can be reunited.

Polly first meets Thomas Lynn when she is a child of ten, visiting her grandmother at Hallowe'en, and he is a young man just starting his career as a

¹³ Jones, 'Whirlwind Tour', p. 155.

¹⁴ Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal: A Personal Odyssey,' in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012) pp. 79-98 (p. 94).

musician¹⁵. Gradually, Polly begins to realize that Tom is under the power of woman named Laurel, and that Laurel sacrifices young men as a way to gain immortality for herself. Tom and Polly's friendship grows, enhanced by their mutual pleasure in story-telling, as they create alter-egos: Tom as the hero Tan Coul, and Polly as his assistant, Hero, a name that echoes the legendary lovers Hero and Leander, another source Jones cites for this book. Over the years, they write to each other, developing the story, and Tom sends Polly books to help her in her quest to be a hero, that also hold clues to Tom's situation. Gradually Polly comes to understand that Tom is still under the control of his ex-wife, Laurel, but she doesn't fully understand the implications. At a critical point in their relationship, Polly makes a terrible mistake, giving Laurel power over her that allows Laurel to wipe her memories of Tom. The novel's structure reflects Polly's internal quest to recover her lost memories. It opens with Polly, now an adult, suddenly realizing there is a whole portion of her life that she has forgotten, and ends with her in a race against time to save Tom, just as the Janet of the ballad saved Tam Lin.

In a crucial difference from the original, however, Polly must not so much hold on to Tom as let go. Indeed, in many ways, Tom has been holding on to Polly, using her as a way to keep himself safe, and it is ultimately only in both letting go and setting each other free that they are able to be together in a romantic relationship. Both characters have to suffer: Polly by losing her memories of Tom, and Tom by being forced to recognize that he could not take Polly's love for granted. These elements are underlined intertextually not so much by the 'Tam Lin' story as by several other crucial intertexts (among a host that run through the novel): the related stories of Cupid and Psyche and 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon,' *Till We Have Faces*, C.S. Lewis's retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth,

¹⁵ As a young child, Polly thinks Tom quite an old man, but later realizes that he is much younger than she had first thought. Also, we are told that Laurel 'likes them young'.

and T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.¹⁶

Jones writes that she was aware that every hero must make a critical mistake; Polly's mistake is to be too clingy and possessive and to spy on Tom. The latter echoes the story lines of the original myth of Cupid and Psyche and the fairy-tale, 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon'. In both, the heroine loses her invisible lover by trying to find out what he really looks like, with the consequence that she must search for him for many years, completing supposedly impossible tasks in order to win him back.

Polly is presented in contrast with two other strong women who are also graspingly selfish: Laurel, Tom's ex-wife, the Queen of Nowhere, and Polly's own mother, who divorces Polly's father and then goes through a series of boy-friends all of whom she claims betray her in some way. She is claustrophobically possessive with her men, even to the point of being jealous of Polly's relationship with her father and suspicious of what she thinks is a new boyfriend's perhaps more than fatherly interest in her pretty daughter. Laurel, too, has a succession of spouses or boyfriends or young male admirers whom she is grooming to be her next partner. Polly must learn that for real happiness she can't let herself become equally possessive.

Jones writes that Cupid and Psyche was a powerful myth before *Till We Have Faces*,¹⁷ but I believe that her use of the myth relies more on C.S. Lewis's novel than either the original Apuleius or any later retelling. Lewis focusses on Psyche's sister, Orual, who claims to love Psyche, but whose love is selfish and grasping, like that of Laurel, or Polly's mother. At the climax of the novel, Orual brings a complaint against the gods for the way she believes she and her sister have been treated. In the course of that speech, she reveals to the judge, and to herself, the extent of her selfishness:

I was my own and Psyche was mine and no one else had any right to her.

¹⁶ As I have outlined in Chapter Three, these are only a small sample of the many intertexts in the novel, although they are arguably the most important.

¹⁷ Jones, 'The Heroic Ideal', p. 96.

Oh, you'll say you took her away into bliss and joy such as I could never have given her, and I ought to have been glad of it for her sake. Why? What should I care for some horrible, new happiness which I hadn't given her and which separated her from me? Do you think I wanted her to be happy, that way?¹⁸

Orual continues in this vein until she suddenly stops herself, in a moment of epiphany. The judge asks, 'Are you answered?' and Orual answers, simply, 'Yes'.¹⁹ She understands now that she had wanted to keep Psyche under her own control and hadn't been able to allow Psyche freedom and happiness away from her. She also realizes that divine love, though apparently more dispassionate, is a thousand-fold more powerful than her own. Lewis adds a psychological dimension here, and an exploration of the nature of divine love, that does not exist in earlier versions of the myth, but which I believe Jones reflects in her own novel, particularly in the extent to which such themes are duplicated in another significant intertext: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

Much has been written, by Jones herself and by critics²⁰, about this connection. Marilynn S. Olson has presented cogently one specific thematic link between the novel and both Eliot's *Four Quartets* and *The Waste Land*. This, I believe, also ties the novel more closely not just to the myth of Cupid and Psyche but to Lewis's retelling of it, because it represents precisely the movement we saw there through negation and loss to a pure form of divine love. Olson argues that the kind of enchanted sleep that Polly falls into when Laurel causes her to lose her memory - the Hemlock of the story - is a necessary process for her to undergo as a way of finding the power of divine love, as Orual does in *Till We Have Faces*. Olson notes that Eliot presents the idea that 'From the point of view of St. John of the Cross, the negation of action and appetite can be a way of moving in the direction of identity, redemption, and creativity' and that in 'Little Gidding' Eliot concludes

¹⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces. A Myth Retold* (Glasgow: Collins, 1980), p. 303.

¹⁹ Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, p. 304.

²⁰ See Butler, Mendlesohn, and Hixon, among others.

that purification and redemption from selfish desires are possible.²¹ Another aspect that Olson highlights is Eliot's notion of time as something that can be redeemed and offer second chances, just as Polly gets a second chance when she recovers her memories.²² As well, Olson argues that Eliot concludes in 'Little Gidding' that purification and redemption from selfish desires are possible. Eliot says memory liberates, so Polly's memory is critical.²³ The connection with *Four Quartets* also underlines the subtlety with which Jones moves between the 'real' world and the fantastic.²⁴ Throughout this novel, Jones uses both intertextual references and specific symbols within the text to complicate the already complicated layers of reality she is representing.

When Polly and Tom first meet, at a funeral, he leads her out into the garden of Laurel's house:

As he spoke, they pushed out from between the grey hedges into a small lawn with an empty sunken pool in it. A brown bird flew away, low across the grass as they came, making a set of sharp shrieking cries. The wind gusted over, rolling the dry leaves in the concrete bottom of the pool, and a ray of sun followed the wind, travelling swiftly over the lawn.²⁵

These lines, of course, recall the opening of 'Burnt Norton,' with its suggestion of two worlds, and the thrush call offering a 'call to adventure'. This is underlined when Tom first shows Polly the urn inscribed with the words 'Here' and 'Now',

²¹ Marilynne S. Olson, 'Sleeping Beauty and Hero, Too: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and *The Waste Land* as Substrata in *Fire and Hemlock*,' *Children's Literature Association*, 2005, Available

<<http://www.childlitassn.org/assets/docs/2005olson1.pdf>>, p. 3.

²² Olson, 'Sleeping Beauty', p. 2.

²³ Olson, 'Sleeping Beauty', p. 4.

²⁴ Catherine Butler also explores this topic in 'Now Here: Where Now? Magic as Metaphor and as Reality in the Writing of Diana Wynne Jones'

²⁵ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 22.

which can be recombined to read 'Nowhere'. Turning the urn allows them to pass from the mundane world to the enchanted world that Laurel rules. But there are two sides to that enchanted world as well; near the climax of the novel, Polly finds herself dwelling on Nowhere as she and Tom used to imagine it:

You slipped between Here and Now to the hidden Now and Here - as Laurel had once told another Tom, there was that bonny path in the middle - but you did not necessarily leave the world. Here was a place where the quartet was grinding out dissonance. There was a lovely tune beginning to come from it. Two sides to Nowhere, Polly thought. One really was a dead end. The other was the void that lay before you when you were making up something new out of ideas that no one else had quite had before.²⁶

What is essential for understanding this novel, and Jones's work as a whole, is to recognize that the Fire of the title, the symbolic fire of the imagination, is accessible in *this* world, and that Laurel's 'Nowhere' is a place of stagnation and death. A reader's expectations - a reader who has grown up with Narnia or Harry Potter - might lead her to believe that the enchanted realm is an exclusive place of wonders not available to her. Jones, however, offers the enchanted world as one that is indeed available to us through the power - the fire - of the imagination and that, in Keats's words 'whatever the imagination seizes as truth must be true, whether it existed before or not'.²⁷

Jones uses two other objects in the novel to represent symbolically this complex relationship between imagination and reality. The first is a photograph of hemlock plants with a bonfire behind it that Polly steals from Laurel's house. As Polly looks at it, she believes that figures leap into being behind it. The other is an opal necklace that Polly's grandmother gives her. When Gran tells her that it is a piece cut off a rock and bent over crystal, Polly tells her that she has made her 'see it in two lights' both as a mundane sliver of a rock and as a magical object. Both

²⁶ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 400.

²⁷ John Keats, 'Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817'.

these objects represent concretely Jones's two levels of reality. These two layers of reality overlap, and it is in their overlap that the world that Tom and Polly create in their game of heroic stories comes to exist.

In Tom and Polly's imaginary world, Tom is called Tom Piper, and he runs a hardware store in Stow-on-the-Water with his sister Edna. Tom Piper has a heroic alter- ego, Tan Coul, and an assistant, Hero, who is Polly in this world. Tom wants to know how it works. Does he have to become Mr. Piper in order to become Tan Coul, or could he switch into Tan Coul from London? Polly says 'You mustn't ask it to bits'.²⁸ 'It's not that simple. Mr. Piper is you, too'.²⁹ Jones represents the notion of all possibilities existing at once, like the vases Nowhere/ Now Here: 'Sort of both,' [Polly] said. 'The other place they came from and where you do your deeds is here - but it's not here too'.³⁰

Tom and Polly go to Stow-on-the-Water and find a hardware store, which is indeed run by a Mr. Piper who has a 'sister' called Edna who has a son named Leslie. Polly says 'It's all true. Except that it isn't'. The adult Polly realizes that she has two strands of memory: the mundane one and the one including Tom. Martha Hixon suggests, although it is not entirely clear in the text, that certain characters in the second strand (Thomas Piper and Leslie) did not exist until Tom and Polly invent them, but once invented have an independent life of their own.³¹ Hixon argues that Polly is open to the possibilities of the unknown when she is a child; as she grows older, she loses that capacity and is locked into the single strand of ordinary experience. As she recovers her memory, she is able, by the end of the novel, to see the truth as a whole, not just one part of it or another.³²

²⁸ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 77.

²⁹ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 78.

³⁰ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 79.

³¹ Martha Hixon, 'The Importance of Being Nowhere: Narrative Dimensions and Their Interplay in *Fire and Hemlock*,' In *Diana Wynne Jones. An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, Eds. Teya Rosenberg and others (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 96-107 (p. 100).

³² Hixon, 'Importance of Being Nowhere', p. 104.

Indeed, the four years after Polly ‘lets go’ of Tom - after she makes her crucial mistake - ‘had been formless and humdrum years. Polly had done things, true, but it had all been without shape, as if she had been filleted away from her own motives and the things which gave her shape’.³³ In a strikingly Platonic image, Jones writes that life in her Oxford flat with her friend Fiona ‘passed Polly like a show of shadows on the wall’.³⁴ But it is a book that begins to awaken her, and it is through listening to a recording of Tom playing, now a mature and skilled artist, that she feels ‘that feeling of a pattern being made’ that unlocks her final memory.³⁵

Polly races to follow Tom to Nowhere, where he is to be sacrificed to provide continued health to Laurel, the Queen of Faerie. But Polly comes to the crucial realization that ‘the only way to win is to lose’;³⁶ Jones writes that Polly has to let Tom go, hurtfully, and ‘only when hurting can [Tom] summon the full force of the fire - which is to some extent physical passion and to an even greater extent the true strength of the heroic world of the imagination Polly and Tom have built together’.³⁷ It is interesting that one of the books Tom sends Polly is C.S. Lewis’s *Perelandra*, which is a reworking of Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost’, an exploration of a world that is unfallen and the attempt to prevent the ‘fall’ of man from occurring. The name of the protagonist, Ransom, can refer to the notion of sacrifice, the giving of one valuable thing for another, and, indeed, is often associated with Christ. In the climactic duel, Tom can use anything to help himself which is truly his. He believes that Polly is his, but she isn’t his possession any more than he is hers. Polly takes the risk of sacrificing their potential life together in order to free Tom from Laurel’s power. Jones is making a statement about the freedom of the will that is necessary in a relationship. It was wrong of Tom to use Polly, just as it was wrong of Polly to spy on him and to play emotional games with him. She realizes the truth and is able to set them both free because they have both suffered but even more

³³ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 388.

³⁴ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 341.

³⁵ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 361.

³⁶ Jones, *Fire and Hemlock*, p. 332.

³⁷ Jones, ‘The Heroic Ideal’, p. 97.

because they both have the creative spirit to be able to look forward, not stay in a life of stagnation or smothering. This is Eliot's lesson of the Fisher King in the Grail legend. Undying is stagnation; death is renewal and regrowth.

The Fisher King Revived: *Hexwood*

As we have seen, Jones believes that a hero must suffer, and that suffering involves deep personal sacrifice and loss. Another character who suffers greatly and must come to terms psychologically with the wrongs done to him and with his guilt and shame for his own actions is Mordion, one of the central characters of the novel *Hexwood*. I have written in Chapter Three about the complex web of Arthurian allusions in this novel, but here I wish to explore some aspects in more depth: Mordion's association with the Fisher King of Arthurian Romance (and, of course, of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*) and the way that Jones represents different levels of reality in the same way that she does in *Fire and Hemlock*. Mordion's arc is something of a reversal of Tom and Polly's; where both Tom and Polly had to learn about unselfish love, in a sense, Mordion has to learn to be selfish, to allow himself the possibility of a relationship that he thought was denied him. In the process, Jones shows us once again that a story can be changed. Mordion's story bears a clear relationship to Mordred's in the tragedy of King Arthur, and as we shall see also has many of the hallmarks of a Fisher King figure. This mythical background does not dictate his outcome: his sacrifice allows him to achieve happiness rather than simply to echo Mordred and Arthur's tragedy.

As I have discussed earlier, it is possible to find multiple allusions to multiple legends, stories and novels throughout *Hexwood*, but behind the structural sleights-of-hand lies a relatively simple story: an Inter-Planetary Corporation is ruled by an oligarchy of five powerful individuals called Reigners. For some time, all the power in The Reigner Corporation has been held by one leader, Orm Pender, known as Reigner One. Reigner One has held on to power by disabling, or keeping under his own control, an artificial intelligence called the bannus. The bannus's role was to put candidates for the position of Reigner through simulation games and to choose the most suitable candidate. The intention

was that a new set of Reigners would be assigned at reasonable intervals, but Reigner One has prevented this from happening. Released from Reigner One's power through an accident, the Bannus takes advantage of its freedom to create a series of story-lines that will result in the overthrow of Reigner One. These stories, based in this instance on grail quests and heroic fantasy, comprise the disjointed episodes we encounter as readers of the novel, as the Bannus puts the various candidates for a position as Reigner through their paces.

What underlies the basic plot I have outlined above is what can be called the myth of kingship. In this story-pattern, a king fathers a son, but learns that his son will destroy him when he grows up. The king attempts to do away with his son, but the son survives and grows up ignorant of his own heritage, brought up away from the center of power by foster parents. He undergoes various trials and makes his way to the place of his birth, where he kills his father (sometimes 'accidentally') and takes over as king. This basic plot-line can be found in the myths of Theseus, Odysseus, Osiris, Romulus and Remus, Arthur, Arthur's son Mordred, and the biblical figures of Moses and Christ, among many others (including, of course, Luke Skywalker): please see Appendix B for an outline. When this story-line overlaps with the quest for the Grail, the elder king is often identified as the Fisher King, wounded and impotent, who is replaced by the younger, virile knight. The whole, in ritual, may have represented the turning of the seasons and the continuing fertility and health of the land to which the king is tied.³⁸ When, in Malory's version of the Arthurian legends, the younger hero is Mordred, Arthur's son, the story becomes a tragedy, in which a great king suffers as a result of an error or sin - sleeping with his half-sister. Jones uses the figure of Mordion, in *Hexwood*, not just to add another version to this collection of legends, but to rehabilitate the tragedy of Arthur. In her version, the Mordred figure and the Fisher King figure merge, and Mordion/Mordred takes power as Reigner One, but with Arthur ruling alongside him as one of his fellow Reigners.

³⁸ This is of course the central argument of Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge University Press, 1920) which lies behind Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Orm Pender, the corrupt leader of Reigner Corporation, undertook a system of in-breeding in order to maintain a line of powerful individuals to be his Servant: his assassin. Pender also knows that someone in his line has the potential to overthrow him; indeed, the bannus program was originally intended to find a successor. For this reason, Pender has tried to prevent the bannus from doing its work (or from fulfilling a 'prophecy', to use a more mythic frame). Mordion is a product of Pender's breeding program and has been raised in isolation along with six other children who were forced to endure systematic abuse, even torture, in order to create someone who would be completely loyal to Pender and capable of murdering for him. Mordion tried, and failed, to protect the other children, then, under mind-control, he is forced to serve the man he hates beyond reason. He is full of self-loathing and buries his own memories of his past; however, it is only by facing them, and looking at the dark side of his own nature, that he is able to confront Orm Pender, kill him, and accept his new position as Reigner One and the prospect of happiness with Vierran. When Mordion and the Bannus are talking towards the end of the book, when Mordion is coming face to face with his memories, Mordion says, 'The worst was being forced to be so respectful'. The Bannus is surprised that he picks that feeling out of so much abuse and suffering. Mordion replies 'You try being sick every time you want to laugh at someone'.³⁹ Indeed, Mordion begins to become himself again when he is able to laugh. Focusing on the role of the bannus in manipulating events, Farah Mendlesohn reads Mordion's story as a representative of what she calls the 'god-game' structure, where a powerful godlike being 'plays' with humankind. She also argues that his 'education and testing almost exactly parallel the conventional Bildungsroman of genre fantasy'.⁴⁰ This is true, but the 'conventional Bildungsroman of genre fantasy' borrows its plotlines from the same mythical background that I have been outlining, and lies behind the 'grail quest' that the

³⁹ Diana Wynne Jones, *Hexwood* (London: Methuen, 1993), p. 246.

⁴⁰ Farah Mendlesohn, *DWJ* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 50.

Bannus uses as the basis of his simulations.⁴¹ What is important is the way Jones, via the Bannus and via her portrayal of a hero who can resist tyranny, subverts the apparent inevitability of the myths. Elsewhere, Mendlesohn notes correctly that the origins of quest fantasy 'lie in epic, in the Bible, in the Arthurian romances, and in fairy tales'.⁴² What is, for Jones, a conscious mythic link, I believe, is the need for growth and renewal, the power of love, and the need to break away from tyranny.

In what I'm calling the 'myth of kingship,' Mordion can be seen to play both roles: the exhausted and impotent Fisher King and the young, virile knight who replaces him. He is clearly a Fisher King figure. He loves fishing with his back to the sun and he has wounds both literal - the cut on his wrist made when he and Ann 'create' Hume - and figurative: the deep emotional scars from the abuse he suffered at Orm Pender's hands and his guilt at the role of killer he has been forced to assume. At first, he refuses to accept his own magic power or to reach out in a romantic relationship. He is reluctant to accept responsibility for Hume because of what he sees as his earlier failure to protect the other children. When Mordion first emerges from the stasis sleep into which he has been placed, the bannus makes him an old man, resembling his ancestor Martellian and the zombie-like Reigner Five. Being represented in this way also creates an overlap with another fairly common story element in Arthurian Romance, in which a character goes mad and lives like a hermit in the forest: Lancelot is one obvious example. In the early story of Kentigern and Lailoken, Kentigern meets a madman, 'naked, hairy, and wretched, [who] ran toward him in a fit of frenzy'. His name was Lailoken, but

⁴¹ Joseph Campbell's 'monomyth' theory is generally discredited, but there is an undeniable similarity between many Indo-European heroic myths that Campbell used to generate his theories and with which no doubt Jones would have been familiar. The pattern is there even if she was only using Arthurian myth. For the 'monomyth' theory, see Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

⁴² Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), Kindle Edition, loc. 399.

some said he was Merlin, the famous seer.⁴³ As Mordion does in Jones's variation, the madman used to sit perched on a cliff over the rushing waters of a river.⁴⁴ Other characters in the novel also play this role: Reigner Five appears at the Castle as a Hermit figure, and is seen later living like a hermit in a cave, where Ann/Vierran mistakes him for Mordion. 'King Ambitas' is obviously intended to play the traditional Fisher King figure, carried around on a stretcher because of his wound, waiting endlessly to marry Morgan La Trey, but his 'wound' is a bruise on his stomach, not serious at all, and in fact Mordion has to struggle to hide his laughter when he sees it. Mordion regains his more youthful appearance when he meets Ann/Vierran - suggestive of the restorative role that their relationship will ultimately have - and of course is in the end the person to bring down Reigner One and restore balance both literally and figuratively.

The Bannus gives the other Reigners each a more 'fixed' identity - Reigner Two as Ambitas the Fisher King, Reigner Three as 'Morgan La Trey,' Reigner Four as the bluff hearty knight-at-arms, his 'bannus' identity of 'Sir Fors' obviously based on Sir Bors, whereas it seems that Mordion is given the opportunity to explore various choices. This is another instance, as in *The Game* (see Chapter Five), where Jones seems to be presenting the notion that fluidity and flexibility are positive attributes, and that although she does also seem to argue for an essential 'self', individuals may choose or reject the personae that external influences impose upon them. When Ann first meets Mordion, he reminds her of a monk or a pilgrim, but later she sees a different side to him:

Ann was fascinated. Mordion working on Yam was a different person, neither the mad-seeming enchanter who had created Hume, nor the harassed monk trying to build a house and watch Hume at the same time. He was cool and neutral and efficient, a cross between a doctor and a motor

⁴³ Goodrich, Peter, Ed., *The Romance of Merlin. An Anthology* (London: Garland, 1990), p. 5.

⁴⁴ Goodrich, p. 6.

mechanic with perhaps, a touch of dentist and sculptor thrown in.⁴⁵

Later, when 'Ann' returns to her own identity as Vierran and she knows that Mordion is the person she knew as the Servant, she realizes that the Bannus had gotten round the Servant's training too, and shown Vierran Mordion the man - a variety of Mordions, from the one who fussed over Hume, to the one who, so easily and expertly, snapped the neck of a rabbit. In an important scene near the end of the novel, Mordion finally comes face to face with the Bannus. All the different aspects of Mordion's identity are represented like points of light, stars in a constellation. The Bannus, indeed, offers Mordion the choice to set aside his struggles and to become an actual constellation. It is another measure of Mordion's heroic nature that he chooses to remain human and to see the confrontation with Reigner One to its end. At the moment of his choice, the decision seems to be a personal sacrifice, remaining as a human and facing Orm Pender; he does not know that Vierran is in love with him, in fact believes that he is not worth loving, and does not expect any personal benefit from his actions.

Among the many issues raised in *Hexwood*, along with questions of personal identity, is the whole nature of reality. Ann spends much of her early encounters with Hume and Mordion believing that they are not real, in the same way that she questions the reality of the 'voices' inside her head: 'The Boy was always behaving as if he were real, instead of just an invention of Ann's'.⁴⁶ Early on, Ann's curiosity is roused by seeing a mysterious van drive up at the Hexwood Estates near her house, and her first encounter with Mordion and Hume comes as a result of her going into Banners Wood to investigate. Ann thinks it is a coincidence that the van she sees has a logo of balanced scales. All of her 'voices' become extremely interested when she tells them about it. 'I think it's an accident' she says. The Boy replies 'You think that because no one on Earth really believes there are any other worlds but Earth'. 'True,' says Ann, 'But you read my mind to know that. I told you not to!' 'I can't help it, said the Boy. 'You think we don't exist either. But we do -

⁴⁵ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 65.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 20.

you know we do really'.⁴⁷ Ann argues with Mordion that the wood isn't real. Mordion tells her 'Theta space has genuine existence, even if no one quite knows what it is'.⁴⁸ Later, she struggles with the notion that she could be acting out a role in someone else's story; 'It could be,' says Yam, 'that the people deciding [on the Bannus's story variations] are not us. We are possibly only actors in someone else's scenes'. 'Not me,' said Ann. 'I'm important. I'm *me*'.⁴⁹ The irony is that in one sense she is not; her 'true' identity is 'Vierran'.

When she has finally remembered her own identity as Vierran and finds herself in the castle along with the others put there by the Bannus, she remembers her first sight of the castle, and the aching feeling of loss she experienced at the sight of it, and thinks to herself that she must have felt sad because she knew it was an illusion; she thinks, 'Maybe beauty and bravery *are* a sham and there *are* no wonderful things in any world'. But then, she is filled with certainty that somehow wonderful things do exist: 'Even if they're only in my own mind, she thought, they're *there* and worth fighting for'.⁵⁰ This passage irresistibly recalls the famous scene in C.S. Lewis's *The Silver Chair* where the evil witch who has kidnapped the heir to Narnia tries to convince his rescuers, Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum the Marshwiggle, that Narnia does not exist, that it is only a dream. Puddleglum declares:

Suppose we *have* only dreamed, or made up, all those things – trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones.⁵¹

This idealism, which in both Lewis and Jones is Platonic, with a concomitant

⁴⁷ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 74

⁴⁹ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 67.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Hexwood*, p. 213.

⁵¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1953), p.164.

elegiac sense of loss, aligns Jones with the Romantic in its fullest sense. In her discussion of *Hexwood*, critic Susan Ang argues that Jones's writing enacts the renewal that we see at the end of the novel through the re-energizing of the 'tired tropes' of fantasy.⁵² Renewal is associated with infinite possibility, and Ang explicitly equates the notion of revolution or rebellion against the reigning powers as marking Jones as a latter-day Romantic. In her work, Ang argues, 'Prometheus is unbound'.⁵³

'You wouldn't believe how lonely you get': *The Homeward Bounders*

Prometheus, although he is unnamed, is — literally — unbound in the third of Jones's greatest novels, *The Homeward Bounders*. This in many ways extraordinary work has received little critical attention, perhaps because many readers are made uncomfortable by its less than happy ending.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, as in both *Fire and Hemlock* and *Hexwood*, Jones uses intertextual echoes — in this case of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, among other things — to underscore her representation of a fight against tyranny, and she depicts the nature of reality in strikingly Platonic terms. She also presents a hero who, with immense personal sacrifice, takes over the role of Prometheus as an 'anchor' to help keep the universe safe from demons who would steal its reality.

Jamie, the protagonist and narrator of *The Homeward Bounders*, is a very ordinary twelve-year old boy, from a large, cheerful family, and he likes playing football and skiving off from school and from running errands for his parents, who own a grocery shop. One day, when he should be making a delivery, his curiosity is aroused by a building he has not noticed before, called The Old Fort, with a sign 'Masters of the Real and Ancient Game'. He is made even more curious when he

⁵² Susan Ang, 'Dogmata, Catastrophe, and the Renaissance of Fantasy in Diana Wynne Jones,' *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 34: 3 (Sept 2010) pp. 284-302.

⁵³ Ang, 'Dogmata, Catastrophe', p. 285.

⁵⁴ In a recent discussion on the Diana Wynne Jones email list, many respondents noted that they couldn't reread the book because it was too sad.

tries to find out something about it in the library and discovers that any reference to it in books about his city have been erased, nor have his parents any recollection of seeing such a place. Fatally, he finally breaks into the grounds of the building and is caught by its occupants, mysterious robed figures who seem to be playing some kind of massive war game inside the Fort. These figures, known only as *Them*, throw Jamie out of his own world and force him to travel the universe until such a time, *They* tell him, as he is able to find his way back to his own world. He eventually learns that *They* are demons who through trickery have gained control of the many worlds in the universe and are playing a huge game across the multiverse. Jamie never stays in any world for long; whenever an important ‘play’ is made in *Their* game, he is pulled to the Boundary between the worlds and sent at random to another world. On his travels, Jamie meets others who travel the Bounds, including the Flying Dutchmen and Ahasuerus the Wandering Jew, and, although one of *Their* ‘rules’ is that those who walk the bounds should travel alone, he manages to join up with others. He also meets an un-named, giant figure, chained to a cliff, whom, we eventually learn, *They* have imprisoned in order to gain control of the multi-verse and enable *Their* war-games. It is Jamie who ultimately frees Prometheus — as he clearly is — but Jamie comes to understand that in order to keep *Them* from regaining a foothold, he must, in effect, assume Prometheus's role and keep travelling the bounds. Travelling the bounds will give him an unnaturally long life, so that although he is free to go and visit friends on other worlds, he will see them age and die while he stays young. The final line of the book strikes a remarkably tragic note for one written for children: ‘But you wouldn't believe how lonely you get’.⁵⁵

The central conceits of the multiverse and the way in which *They* have gained power over Prometheus, and the ultimate freeing of Prometheus, with its connections to the destruction of hope, are outlined in terms that are Platonic, but also that have strong echoes of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. As we have seen

⁵⁵ Diana Wynne Jones, *The Homeward Bounders* (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 224.

elsewhere⁵⁶, Jones uses mirrors and glass to exemplify her concept of human understanding of reality and of multiple worlds. She describes in an interview how the genesis for *The Homeward Bounders* came from observing the reflections of train windows at night: ‘I would look out, and there would be several layers of reflections from the various windows, and you would get lights weaving about, and lights beyond that and reflections beyond that, and you would think this could be a transparent box of worlds’⁵⁷. When Jamie first approaches the Old Fort, he sees that the front door is made of glass. All he can see is reflections, but he doesn’t see his own, which he realizes later should have been a warning:

You know if you go to a barber’s shop with a lot of mirrors, how you can sit looking into one mirror and see through it into the mirror behind you over and over again, until it goes all blurred with distance? Well, what happened was like that. Over and over again, and all blurred, there were suddenly triangular rooms all round. They were slotted in on both sides, and beyond and behind that, and underneath, down and down. They were piled up on top of us too. I looked, but it made me feel ill [...]. It was all so blurry and flickery, and the reflection of the canal arches went striding through the lot, as if that was the only real thing there.⁵⁸

Later, Jamie meets Helen, whose home world is one where the ‘ways’ of the many worlds are studied. She tells Jamie how it is possible to travel from one world to the next:

You have sat down in a place of glass,’ [Helen] said. ‘Glass is all around you, and the place is dark. Now, light a light inside your place of glass. All around you, at once, there are reflections, going back infinitely, until your glass place is multiplied many times over’ [...] ‘Then you have to imagine

⁵⁶ See, for example, *Deep Secret*.

⁵⁷ Diana Wynne Jones, ‘A Conversation With Diana Wynne Jones,’ in *Reflections*, p. 338.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, pp. 21-22.

that there are other places, each peopled, and the other people have their own lights, and you can see those lights reflected. By now there are myriads, all shining and overlapping, and you do not know which is real. This is the way of the worlds. All are real, lights and reflections alike. We pass from one to another, like light'.⁵⁹

Prometheus ultimately tells Jamie how he discovered that the worlds are like many reflections in a pane of glass. When Prometheus discovered this, each world was its own Real Place. Prometheus realized that a place 'is less real if it is seen from outside, or only seen in memory; and also that if a person settles in a place and calls that place Home, then it becomes very real indeed'.⁶⁰ He realized that all reality could be concentrated in one place and removed if someone to whom all worlds were Home never went to any of them, just remembered them. He taught this to *Them*, and *They* used the knowledge to bind him. *They* tell him 'If you are chained, there will eventually be someone for whom no place is real, and he will come along and release you. And you are bound to hope that he will come'.⁶¹ Although *They* tell Jamie that he can stay in his Home if he is ever able to return to it, when Jamie does finally find his Home it is a century too late; time has passed more quickly there than it has for him, so that he can effectively never go Home. It is that knowledge that causes Jamie to lose all hope and then to inadvertently free Prometheus.

Jones notes that when she wrote *The Homeward Bounders* she was working out the relationship between hope and memory and thinking about the nature of hope:

the more I thought, the more it seemed to me that hope was an evil as much as it was a good. It was in Pandora's box, you see, which was otherwise full of evils, and it seemed to me that the Greek people who

⁵⁹ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 81.

⁶⁰ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 209.

⁶¹ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 210.

invented the story of Prometheus and his brother knew what they were doing. Hope inspires you, but it also makes you sit back and accept a bad situation.⁶²

We see this in the figure of the Flying Dutchman, who is convinced that any number of things are not permitted - this makes him passive so that he stops trying to find a way out of his situation. Jamie asks him if he carries anchors on his ship, and he says he threw them away. Jamie realizes it is because of the association with *Them*, who have taken the anchor as their symbol.⁶³ 'We took them off,' the Flying Dutchman tells Jamie, 'to show that we are without hope. Hope is an anchor, you know'.⁶⁴ Yet, Prometheus tells Jamie that 'They' were careful to tell the Dutchman and Ahasueras that someone without hope will free Prometheus so that they never actually gave up hoping for it. Jamie comes to realize that hope is a millstone. 'You're so busy staggering along hoping that you can't see the truth'.⁶⁵ After Jamie frees Prometheus, he asks why *They* had to attack Prometheus with a vulture. Prometheus responds that without it he might have fallen into apathy and stopped hoping. 'Hope is the forward-looking part of memory',⁶⁶ he declares, but the implication is that both can be deceptive and unreal.

They play by a set of rules and warn the Bounders that the rules must be followed. But as we have seen so often before, one of Jones's central points is that we must not accept rules imposed by others without questioning them. Prometheus tells Jamie: 'There are no rules, [...] only principles and natural laws. The rules were made by *Them*. *They* are caught inside *Their* own rules now, but there's no need for you to be caught too. Stay outside. If you're lucky, you might catch *Them*

⁶² Diana Wynne Jones, 'Replies to Fans' available
<<http://www.leemac.freeseve.co.uk/answers2.htm>>

⁶³ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 44.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 204.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 211.

up in *Their* own rules.⁶⁷ After Jamie leaves Prometheus, he meets one of *Them*, who orders Jamie to come to him. ‘I needn’t have done what he said, I knew I needn’t. But I was too scared not to’.⁶⁸

Jamie, as a hero, has to learn to resist the tyranny of *Them* and to overcome his own fears, but he also, like Mordion and like Tom and Polly, has to lose everything. Only by losing hope can he release Prometheus and help to bring about a new world. The Prometheus shown here is not the defiant and hubristic Prometheus of Aeschylus; Jones's Prometheus reflects the figure we see in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. In an email to one of the members of the Diana Wynne Jones mailing list, Jones wrote ‘Shelley very definitely lies behind [*The Homeward Bounders*]. I did a lot of work on Shelley just after I came down from Oxford and before I got married, and it later bore fruit’.⁶⁹

In her history of the representations of Prometheus, Carol Dougherty notes that Shelley’s figure, as compared to early representations, ‘is more about an escape from the institution of tyranny than a lament on its limitations’.⁷⁰ Shelley’s Prometheus is not looking for revenge or power for himself: ‘The new Promethean fire is the liberating power of love which can transform the human condition’.⁷¹ Shelley's Prometheus declares, ‘I said all hope was vain but love’.⁷²

When Jamie meets Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus declares ‘If you cast hope aside [...] then all evil is cast out with it. Love and beauty enter in and a new world dawns’.⁷³ This strongly recalls the line in *Prometheus Unbound*: ‘Til Hope creates / from its own wreck the thing it contemplates’.⁷⁴ Shelley believed

⁶⁷ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 54.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 55.

⁶⁹ Nov., 2006. DWJ mailing list suberic.net

⁷⁰ Carol Dougherty, *Prometheus (Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World)* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 101.

⁷¹ Dougherty, p. 100.

⁷² ‘Prometheus Unbound’, I.824.

⁷³ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 142.

⁷⁴ ‘Prometheus Unbound’, IV.573-4.

that hope and despair were two sides of the same coin. In 'A Mask of Anarchy' there is a maiden who calls herself hope, but who looks like despair, and who speaks of her Father, Time, who is 'weak and grey / with waiting for a better day'.⁷⁵ This echoes the image of both Ahasuerus and of the Flying Dutchman, lost in apathy rather than seeking to free themselves.

Carol Dougherty points out that Shelley's Prometheus advocates a return to the Golden Age, where 'thrones were kingless and men walked / one with other even as spirits do'.⁷⁶ Helen's world has not always been as awful as it is when Jamie first travels to it. They have a god named Uquar (who we learn is in fact Prometheus), and a prophecy that freeing him will bring back the 'wider times' when they will have peace and prosperity and will be free to traverse the many worlds. The underlying principle Prometheus teaches Jamie, that 'there are no rules', is the underlying principle of the House of Uquar. Although there is nowhere any explicit reference to Blake in Jones's work, it is very tempting to read a connection between the name 'Uquar' and Blake's Orc, another Promethean figure, also connected with the notion of prophecy, and as well to Blake's fundamental concept of 'mindforg'd manacles',⁷⁷ the deceptive beliefs imposed by human institutions that cloud our potential imaginative and creative vision.

Although Jones's Prometheus laughs that 'they put it about' on Jamie's world that he was punished for stealing fire, it is impossible to escape the association of Prometheus with fire, and with fire as a predominant image of creativity and inspiration throughout Jones's work. I believe that we can also see a connection once more to Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and the association therein with prophecy, sacrifice, and renewal. Before Jamie first encounters Prometheus, he finds himself in a rocky landscape away from the sea: 'I could hear water trickling. You know that hollow pouring sound a little stream makes coming down through rocks'.⁷⁸ It is the sound of water that draws him to the place where Prometheus is

⁷⁵ lines 87-88.

⁷⁶ Dougherty, pp. 131-32.

⁷⁷ William Blake, 'London,' 8.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 48.

chained, and he is not able to see the rocks clearly because everything is swathed in mist. Jamie's description strongly echoes a scene in the section of *The Waste Land*, 'What the Thunder Said,' that Eliot tells us in his notes is in part the journey to the Chapel Perilous: 'If there were water/ And no rock/ If there were rock/ And also water/ And water/ A spring/ A pool among the rock/ If there were the sound of water only' (346-51). When Jamie first sees Prometheus, he describes Prometheus's chains in terms that echo Polly's opal necklace: 'I could see the grains of rock magnified through it [...] and with a milky look. It was like looking through a teardrop'.⁷⁹ When Jamie frees Prometheus, he becomes Prometheus; in a sense, Prometheus is portrayed as a kind of Fisher King figure replaced by a younger, more vital figure. Yet Jamie also to an extent assumes the roles of both the Flying Dutchman and Ahasuerus, doomed to wander the universe, and, through association, also of The Ancient Mariner, who must tell his story throughout the ages.

For Jamie is the narrator of his own story; he uses one of *Their* machines to dictate his account and is going to give the manuscript to one of his own descendants to publish. He declares 'You can all think of it as my gift to you [...] This story of it all can be another gift [...] And if you read it and don't believe it's real, so much the better. It will make another safeguard against *Them*'.⁸⁰ Jamie is the most unassuming, yet perhaps the greatest hero in Jones's work. For him, to abandon hope is to acquire great power, yet that power comes at a terrible price. Jamie's power comes from his absolute freedom, from his personal choice. His sacrifice is not due to some prophecy; no one asks or requires him to do it. There is even something faintly troubling about the way his companions, despite protests, acquiesce in his acceptance of what is essentially a life of loneliness and isolation. Jones wrote: 'The hero, out there as scapegoat, has to do the suffering for everyone'.⁸¹

Jamie is not the only Promethean figure in Jones's work. Fire is, throughout

⁷⁹ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 49.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Homeward Bounders*, p. 224.

⁸¹ Jones, 'Whirlwind Tour', p. 150.

Jones's work, symbolic of creativity and renewal. Heroes, like Polly, Thomas Lynn, Mordion Agenos, and many others, undergo serious trials, but gain creative and rejuvenative power as a result. Jones's representation of heroism in all three of the novels I have discussed in depth in this chapter is, above all, steeped in Romanticism, a Romanticism that is enhanced by the shared intertextual references. Underlying these works is a strong belief in the power of the creative imagination and its potential to change the world for the better. The ordeals undertaken by the heroes, their loss of self and subsequent growth and redemption, can also be related to the important Romantic concept of the sublime, which is often represented as a kind of transcendent experience such as that I discussed in Chapter Six. The sense of loss, the elegiac quality described by Jones's son, may also be aligned with the concept of the sublime, as may the piercing sense of Joy, or Enchantment, described by C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Perhaps most importantly, however, the heroism that Jones portrays is one that is accessible to all; Jamie, the unassuming boy who tells us that he 'never had much else to give,' can, like Jones herself, safeguard the world from the power of ignorance and greed through the power of storytelling.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

There is a moment near the end of *Eight Days of Luke* that exemplifies the way Jones uses intertextuality and its effect on the reader. It also demonstrates the double strands of narrative — the ‘mundane,’ or simple line of story, and the potentially symbolic meaning that is provided by the intertext — that I argue underlies much of her work. The young protagonist, David, living unhappily with a group of mostly horrible relatives, one day lights a bonfire and performs a ‘spell’ that brings to life a boy named Luke, who becomes his friend and helps him through various adventures and, in the process, to come out from under the control of his relatives. Luke enlists David on a quest to help him find a lost object, and David subsequently meets a number of other characters with names like Mr. Wedding and Mr. Chew. An alert reader, along with one or two of the adults in the story, will realize that these are all characters from Norse mythology, and that David’s friend is Loki. However, it is only when David finds the object, which turns out to be a hammer, that he himself realizes who Luke is. He hesitates before picking up the hammer:

The reason for his hesitation had nothing to do with [doubt about what it was]. Of course it was a hammer, and he knew who the man was who owned it now. The trouble was, he knew who Luke was too, and he would never be able to think of Luke in the same way again.¹

Later, however, when he sees his friend, he realizes that ‘knowing all about someone need not change your feelings at all. Luke might be lord of fire and master of mischief. He might have done a number of appalling things and be going to do more before he was through, but David was simply very glad to see him again’.² Jones has written that she introduced mythology into *Eight Days of Luke* in order to represent the sense of what she calls ‘the awesome’ that underlies everyday life.

¹ Diana Wynne Jones, *Eight Days of Luke* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1977), p. 167.

² Jones, *Eight Days*, p. 168.

In Jones's world, the numinous is never very far away, and in Jones's writing, mythical or literary allusions that contain deeper symbolic or thematic significance are part of the way her readers can access that kind of power. But in the same way that Luke can be simply a friend, Jones's stories can also be simply stories. They can be read and enjoyed on that 'surface' level, but they achieve greater significance with the symbolic or metaphoric underlay provided by the intertextual references.

I began this thesis by asking the question 'what do intertextual references *do* in Jones's work?' The answer, in one respect, is 'many things'; in each of my chapters I have examined a different *type* of intertextuality, from direct allusions, to parody, through chronotopes and dialogic interrelationships. The plurality we find in that answer is an essential element of Jones's use of intertextuality and one central thematic concept in her work. The answer is also, however, 'one deceptively simple thing': recognizing the intertextual allusion, traversing that bridge between texts, makes the reader see the text in a different way. Just as David, in *Eight Days of Luke*, realizes that the boy he has known as 'Luke' is also the Norse god Loki and has to accept all the mythical baggage that comes with that understanding, a reader, making that connection along with David (and it is worth noting here that the 'Marvel Comics Universe' has added a whole, not-inappropriate, set of possible readings to this allusion) will also read the text differently. That interpretive 'turn' could also trigger a return to and revision for the reader of her view of other characters and events in the novel. Jones's use of intertextuality is emblematic of the process of discovery in a text and, indeed, the possibility of joy and wonder that can be engendered in the act of reading. That this affect is tied both implicitly and explicitly in Jones's work to the creative imagination is one factor that I have suggested throughout this thesis allies her with the Romantic.

In his introduction to a collection of essays linking Romanticism and the Postmodern, editor James McGavran writes very perceptively about the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes*, finding in it aspects that reflect elements of Romanticism, most importantly Calvin's double vision: 'seeing people and things as they exist

both in their material reality and in his imagination'.³ McGavran argues that Bill Watterson deals 'with *both* the objective nature of reality, whereby Hobbes's "real" presence, words, and actions in the strip have to "make sense" to his readers, *and* the subjective nature, whereby Calvin is always projecting his own unspoken thoughts into his alter-ego'.⁴ This double vision, which McGavran refers to as 'Blakean',⁵ is a foundational aspect of Jones's work, and, in its insistence on the centrality of the imagination, allies Jones strongly with the Romantic. This final chapter will return to some of the central concepts of my earlier chapters and link them more explicitly to certain elements of Romanticism: a subversive attitude towards power structures, open-endedness, and metafictional conceits that can be linked to the concept of Romantic irony, as well as the 'double vision' already introduced. Most importantly it will identify the 'intertextual turn' — that sudden realization or jolt of discovery that occurs during the reading process, such as that in the above excerpt from *Eight Days of Luke* — with the concept of the sublime.

Romanticism is a term that, like many used in contemporary literary theory, is slippery and disputed. Most critics recognize that there are two separate strands to the discussion: historical Romanticism, rooted in the specific context of the social, political and philosophical movements of the mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries, and what can be described as general, ideological or conceptual Romanticism. René Welleck argues that all the diverse discussions of Romanticism, historically rooted or not, 'see the implication of imagination, symbol, myth, and organic nature, and see it as part of the great endeavour to

³ James Holt McGavran, 'Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations, or "It's Magical World, Hobbes, Ol' Buddy" ... Crash!' in *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations*, Ed. James Holt McGavran (Iowa City: U of Iowa Press, 1999), pp. 1-22 (p. 1).

⁴ McGavran, p. 8.

⁵ McGavran, p. 6.

overcome the split between subject and object, the self and the world, the conscious and the unconscious'.⁶ Herbert Schueller describes Romanticism as

deriving from the urge of the human psyche to go beyond the human confines in which it finds itself. It wants to go beyond the present in time, the present place in space, the forms of expression and speech in which it is bound, the orders, organizations, and arrangements existing in economic, religious, and political life, the forms already set and declared in art, the confines of outward public life, the restrictions placed upon the individual.⁷

Ideological Romanticism, then, as it is reflected in Jones's work, can be described as a philosophy that seeks to reconcile the paradoxical split between subject and object, 'reality' and imagination, and as an aesthetic that argues for the transformative and restorative power of the creative, capable imagination.

Of course, Jones is a fantasy writer, and most critics see the rise in popularity of literary fantasy and fairy tales for children as being rooted in the historical Romantic period as well. Deborah Thacker notes that 'a fascination among poets and thinkers of the day for speaking to children through fairy tale and fantasy challenged the prevailing trend for moralistic stories with an evangelical emphasis, and suggested a new way of perceiving the child-as-audience'.⁸ Making the connection with Postmodernism, Thacker highlights among certain present-day authors 'a writerly engagement with language, and the suggestion of an ability to make meaning [which] suggests a Romantic sensibility that touches on the

⁶ René Welleck, *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 220.

⁷ Herbert Schueller, 'Romanticism Reconsidered', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 20:4 (Summer 1962): 359-68 (p. 360).

⁸ Deborah Cogan Thacker, 'Imagining the Child' in *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Eds. Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.13-25 (p. 16).

feminine, *imaginary*, roots of creativity'.⁹ As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Thacker does not name Jones among this number of present-day authors, but she certainly could have.

Thacker traces the continuation of a Romantic sensibility through the Victorian period in the word-play of Lewis Carroll and the political and social subversiveness of E. Nesbit. Indeed, although many, if not most, critics place Jones in the tradition of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, Colin Burrow, Jones's son, argues that her biggest literary influence was E. Nesbit, whose successors, including Jones, 'created a kind of fantasy which does not simply run away into ideal or magical worlds, but which uses those ideal worlds to work out real problems from their own life'.¹⁰ More work needs to be done on developing the connection between Nesbit and Jones, and it may be that such a study would reveal influence in terms of sensibility and subject matter rather than direct quotation. Certainly, Anita Moss, writing about E. Nesbit, argues very strongly for aspects of Romanticism in Nesbit's work, all of which can also be found in Jones's. Moss describes Nesbit as an 'heir to Romantic conceptions of nature, art, imagination, and the child, [who] celebrated creative activity of all kinds and stressed the imagination's capacity to infuse life with meaning and value'.¹¹ Like Jones, Nesbit deplored an education system that stifled creativity and believed that 'liberty of thought, word and deed was one of the rights of children'.¹² Her characters despise 'goody books' and avoid them in favour of fairy tales, adventure stories, and detective stories.¹³ Although Jones did not read

⁹ Deborah Cogan Thacker, 'Playful Subversion,' in *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Eds. Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.139-50 (p. 149).

¹⁰ Colin Burrow, 'Fantasies for Children', in *Reflections: On the Magic of Writing* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), pp. 343-351 (p. 345).

¹¹ Anita Moss, 'E. Nesbit's Romantic Child in Modern Dress' in *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, Ed. James Hold McGavran Jr. (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1991), pp.225-47 (p. 225).

¹² Cited in Moss, p. 227.

¹³ Moss, p. 228.

Nesbit as a child, it is interesting to speculate on an intertextual embellishment in the autobiographical detail of the sign 'GODDY BOOKS' she claims to have put over a shelf of 'prize books' from school. Moss describes the 'spirited naughtiness' of the Bastable children, who have spiritual heirs in the strong-willed children in Jones's work. Nesbit parodies moral tales; when the Bastables set out to be 'good children', Moss argues, 'they outdo themselves in naughtiness'.¹⁴ Nesbit's characters are reasonably intelligent and resourceful, as are Jones's; Moss notes that 'the sophistication and intelligence of her child characters are also features which allow them to escape entrapment in the text and to evade the adult writer's nostalgia as projected in many sentimental depictions of childhood'.¹⁵

Significantly, Moss argues that E. Nesbit, in her later fantasies in particular, 'does not lock magic behind the golden gates of childhood but makes it available within the context of mundane reality'. She stresses the importance of the way 'characters make the magic for themselves through the creative acts of storytelling and art'.¹⁶ I have argued throughout this thesis for the way that Jones uses storytelling and metafictional aspects as a means of giving power to readers, to free them to think for themselves and to negotiate the complexities of life. Deiter Petzold draws a direct connection between metafictional techniques, in works such as Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* and Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, and Romantic irony, a concept that can be defined as an acknowledgement of the chaotic nature of the universe even as an artist (or a reader) tries to bring order to it: he suggests that metafictional conceits 'do not comment, as the modernists did, on the absurdity of existence, rather [they] celebrate a sense of exuberance and play'.¹⁷

¹⁴ Moss, p. 230.

¹⁵ Moss, p. 231.

¹⁶ Moss, p. 245.

¹⁷ Deiter Petzold, 'Taking Games Seriously: Romantic Irony in Modern Fantasy for Children of All Ages,' in *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations*, Ed. James Holt McGavran (Iowa City: U of Iowa Press 1999), pp. 87-104 (p. 90).

According to Anne K. Mellor, Romantic irony is a world view that perceives the world as chaotic. The artist who shares this view

must acknowledge the inevitable limitations of his own finite consciousness and all man-made structures or myths. But even as he denies the absolute validity of his own perceptions and structuring conceptions of the universe, even as he consciously deconstructs his mystifications of the self and the world, he must affirm and celebrate the process of life by creating new images and ideas [...]. He deconstructs his own texts in the expectation that such deconstruction is a way of keeping in contact with a greater creative power.¹⁸

Symbols, she argues, 'are generated only to be qualified and rejected; mythic patterns, including the Christian one of fall-penance-redemption, are tested and found wanting. And yet they affirm the creative process'.¹⁹ As I have shown, throughout Diana Wynne Jones's work the worst villains are those who steal and make use of the creative power of others, such as the vampiric Laurel in *Fire and Hemlock* or the demonic *Them* of *The Homeward Bounders*, or those whose adherence to stale traditions stifles creativity and freedom of choice, like Aunt Maria. Mellor discusses the work of Friedrich Schlegel, often credited with developing the concept of Romantic irony, and his insistence that 'finite human perceptions can never completely capture an infinite chaos. For if they did so, becoming or change would no longer be possible and life would cease'.²⁰ The central conflict of *Fire and Hemlock* is inscribed in its title: the hemlock is the stagnation imposed by Laurel's spell over both Tom and Polly; the fire is the creativity they share that allows them to escape her. It is important to note, however, that in a Blakean sense, such a contrary state, and the struggle through it,

¹⁸ Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge Mass. And London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 5.

¹⁹ Mellor, p. 6.

²⁰ Mellor, p. 7.

is necessary for the growth of both characters and their relationship. It is necessary, as I showed in my last chapter, for Tom and Polly to suffer, and to continue to fight heroically, in order to maintain their relationship. It is also important to note that many of the more morally ambiguous power figures in Jones's works, such as the Bannus, in *Hexwood*, or Hasruel the Djinn, in *Castle in the Air*, can be identified as 'authorial'. As I have argued elsewhere²¹ characters in Jones's work, even as they celebrate subversiveness and creativity, also have to learn to modify their own personalities, especially a tendency to be bossy; it would be too easy for someone of intelligence who happens to have magical powers to become tyrannical. In the same way, it is easy for an author, too much in love with her own ideas, to impose them on others. Thematically, Jones warns against unthinking obedience to any kind of doctrine, however tempting. There is, as well, the constant risk in the Romantic imagination of falling too deeply in love with the imaginative world, becoming lost, like the Ancient Mariner, in a world of one's own creation. Mellor notes that, according to Schlegel, a sceptical awareness of one's own limitations is necessary to 'detach imagination from an excessive commitment to its own finite creations',²² while 'nature's movement from chaos to order and back to chaos, from life to death and new life, is psychologically paralleled by a movement back and forth between a desire for change and a desire for order'.²³

I have stressed throughout this thesis the deliberate open-endedness of many of Jones's allusions. Mellor makes the important point that not all Romantic works follow the trajectory of innocence towards experience and thence to a greater innocence; 'many central romantic works exhibit a structure that is deliberately open-ended and inconclusive'. Open-ended poems such as 'The Eve of St. Agnes' or 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', where the reader is left with many unanswered questions and there is no clear resolution to the story, 'can be seen', Mellor argues, 'as liminal rites of passage; [...] as movements *between* one structure and another. At the centre of these works lies an all-important liminal experience of

²¹ See my 2010 article, "Why don't you be a tiger?"

²² Mellor, p. 10.

²³ Mellor, p. 11.

unstructured openness, a sacred participation in the process of life'.²⁴ Deborah Thacker links the oral, participatory nature of fairy tales to the same Romantic open-endedness, suggesting that a 'narrative contract which offers an open text and invites the reader to share in the making of meaning implies a different relationship between author and reader, which is more democratic in approach, nurturing an imaginative spirit rather than controlling or enforcing particular ideologies'.²⁵

I return at this point to the image from which I take the title of this thesis: 'fish in dark water'. Jones uses it to refer to the myriad myths and folktales — 'about ninety' she writes²⁶ — that manifested in her imagination once she had settled on the story of Tam Lin as the underlying structure of *Fire and Hemlock*. On its own, it is a striking image, and the first time I read it I pictured large goldfish or carp, like Japanese koi, swimming in a green pool. However, during my research, I followed up a reference, also in *Fire and Hemlock*, to the novel *Henrietta's House*, by Elizabeth Goudge, one of the books Thomas Lynn sends the young Polly. In a climactic episode of that book, several characters are lost in a cave, and they come upon a river filled with fish, which in this lightless environment are white:

The Dean put his oil lamp on the ground and knelt beside him and together they watched fascinated as the strange white shapes swam round and round in the black water, their ghostly bodies rippling back and forth as though they were weaving some never-ending pattern upon the black loom of the water.²⁷

For me, reading this sent a startling intertextual jolt of recognition; it quite literally gave me chills. Of course, I can never be sure that this was the image Jones

²⁴ Mellor, p. 6.

²⁵ Thacker, 'Imagining the Child', p. 17.

²⁶ Jones, 'Answers to Some Questions', p. 126.

²⁷ Elizabeth Goudge, *Henrietta's House* (Harmondsworth: Puffin, 1972), p. 93.

intended in her phrase ‘fish in dark water’, but the connection resonates for me as a reader and for my thesis. The image itself is magical, but so is the potential link it develops with the creative imagination: as if they were in Tolkien’s ‘cauldron of stories,’ Jones’s own mythosphere, or Bakhtin’s chronotopes, the fish make patterns, repeating, but endlessly changing, like the sixteen versions of a Persian fairy-tale that Jones mentions several times in her own discussions of her creative process. ‘Weaving’ is, of course, a potent metaphor for storytelling, one that Jones herself brings to life in *The Spellcoats*. The scene in *Henrietta’s House* has an element of transcendence, a combination of fear and wonder, that I have also argued runs through much of Jones’s work. For the characters in the novel, their experience is something close to sublime; I could describe my own imaginative response to that connection between the works in much the same terms.

Thomas Weiskel, whose work, *The Romantic Sublime*, is still arguably one of the most influential on the topic, articulates three phases in an experience of the sublime: the first is simply the subject’s habitual relationship to the object, during which the mind is at rest. This is the state of normal perception. The second is the phase in which the mind’s relation to the object breaks down. For example, a natural phenomenon occurs on a scale that we cannot grasp, or perhaps as we are reading the text suddenly exceeds comprehension. This causes the sense of fear, wonder, terror, awe or whatever term is used to describe one’s reaction to the sublime. In the third phase, the mind recovers its balance by establishing a new relation that can be taken to symbolize the mind’s relation to a transcendent order.²⁸ In early philosophical iterations of the sublime — as in, for example, Burke — the last phase is often taken as a means for Man to establish his control over nature (the gendering is deliberate here), the supremacy that is achieved through the application of Reason. Kant distinguishes between the ‘mathematical’ and the ‘dynamic’ sublime; put simply, these could be equated with notions of the abstract and the natural worlds respectively. The ‘mathematical’ sublime is the name given to the absolutely great, which ‘calls forth that emotion which no estimation by

²⁸ Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1976), pp. 23-24.

numbers can evoke'.²⁹ The dynamic sublime is achieved through our contemplation of Nature, and, Kant argues, may be considered in an aesthetic judgement as might that has no dominion over us.³⁰ Again, put very simply, it is nature viewed from a safe distance. Magnificent objects in nature are attractive because of their fearfulness and because they allow us to measure ourselves against them. This is the sublime experience of the big-game hunter or the mountain climber.

This focus on power and reason may perhaps help account for the fact that there are few discussions of the sublime in relation to children's books. Children, as I discussed in my introduction, have long been considered to be undeveloped in either faculty. Horror – real horror – which can be a potent source of the sublime response in adult consumers, is not considered 'suitable' for children. Often, indeed, even in Romantic literature, children and childhood are regarded as being a *source* of the sublime: think for example of the *puer aeternus*, the child who comes trailing clouds of glory. This is the idealized view of 'the child' that Jacqueline Rose rightly argued against. No one writes much, if anything, about the possibility that children could *experience* the sublime.

Yet they are believed to be capable of experiencing a transcendent sense of wonder, and I believe that this response can be equated with the sublime. Indeed, Kant's formulation of the sublime includes the notion of transcendence. In today's postmodern world, we might believe that transcendence cannot be achieved through a spiritual response because God has, to some extent, left the building. In writing for children, too much of the 'Goddy', as Jones referred to it, is also regarded with suspicion. However, Anita Moss highlights the Romantic notion of 'secular transcendence' that can be found in E. Nesbit.³¹ She cites a climactic passage in Nesbit's *The Amulet*, where the Amulet itself has been reunified and restored to its own time. The children see a great double arch:

²⁹ Immanuel Kant and Nicholas Walker, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007), p. 82.

³⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 91.

³¹ Moss, p. 233.

[It] glowed in and through the green light that had been there since the Name of Power had first been spoken — it glowed with a light more bright yet more soft than the other light — a glory and splendour and sweetness unspeakable.³²

I would add a passage from an earlier episode, when the children use the Amulet for the first time:

I cannot tell you what language the voice used. I only know that everyone present understood it perfectly. If you come to think of it, there must be some language that everyone could understand, if only we knew what it was. Nor can I tell you how the charm spoke, nor whether it was the charm that spoke, or some presence in the charm. The children could not have told you either. Indeed, they could not look at the charm while it was speaking, because the light was too bright. They looked instead at the green radiance on the faded Kidderminster carpet at the edge of the circle. They all felt very quiet, and not inclined to ask questions or fidget with their feet. For this was not like the things that had happened in the country when the Psammead had given them their wishes. That had been funny somehow, and this was not. It was something like Arabian Nights magic, and something like being in church. No one cared to speak.³³

There are two striking elements in this passage. First, of course, is the sense of awe and wonder expressed in the phrase ‘something like Arabian Nights magic, and something like being in church’, that I equate with the sublime and will explore more fully below. There is as well a very interesting distinction being made between ‘the things that had happened in the country’ — being granted wishes by the Psammead — and this moment. Those adventures, related in the first book in the trilogy, *Five Children and It*, had been ‘funny’ and this was not. The contrast made

³² E. Nesbit, *The Story of the Amulet* (London: Folio Society, 2009), pp. 288-89.

³³ Nesbit, p. 42.

there is like the difference between Jones's earlier works, such as *Wilkin's Tooth* or *The Ogre Downstairs* and her more complex works, such as the Dalemark quartet, *Fire and Hemlock*, *Hexwood* and *The Homeward Bounders*: the difference between simple 'domestic fantasy' and 'enchantment'.

That Jones was aware of the power of fantasy writing to evoke this sense of awe and wonder is clear not just in her own work, as I have described in Chapter Six, but in her accounts of her own response to the 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' chapter in *The Wind in the Willows*. In one of her essays on writing, she describes the 'magic half heard and half out of sight' that wakens children's sense of wonder and 'force[s] their ideas in a new direction – enlarging their imagination, in fact'.³⁴ In a discussion of the same chapter in another essay, Jones writes in terms that evoke the sublime very vividly: the episode, she writes, was 'numinous and strange and sad and urgent and very dangerous and utterly beautiful and *safe* all at the same time', and seemed to her to be 'an ideal of what fantasy should do'.³⁵

In the only, and sadly rather limited, study of the sublime in children's fantasy literature, David Sandner describes what he calls 'the fantastic sublime' as the 'revelatory moment when the imagination, often in communion with nature, reveals a transcendent purpose'.³⁶ His term 'the fantastic sublime' is used to distinguish it from what he calls 'the natural sublime': a sublime found in nature. This dichotomy, although somewhat simplistic, reflects the split between the 'natural' and the 'fantastic' by Wordsworth and Coleridge respectively in *The Lyrical Ballads*, and may be usefully connected with the 'double vision' in Jones's work that I have been discussing throughout this thesis.

In a more recent study (2013), focusing on the 'post-Romantic sublime' found in twentieth and twenty-first century novels for adults, Steven Vine suggests that the sublime 'can be read as a discourse of "invention" ... to the extent that

³⁴ Jones, 'Writing for Children', pp. 72-3.

³⁵ Jones 'Whirlwind Tour' p. 159.

³⁶ David Sandner, *The Fantastic Sublime: Romanticism and Transcendence in Nineteenth-Century Children's Fantasy Literature* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 4.

sublimity entails a coming upon of the new, the unregulated and the surprising, and involves an encounter with what changes the rules of a discourse, the conventions of a narrative, or points to the unrepresentable, the unknown, the *other* beyond the subject'.³⁷ This interpretation of the sublime in a literary work is, I believe, consistent not only with what I have been arguing about Jones's use of intertextuality, that it has the effect of up-ending a reader's expectations or adding something that broadens the reader's view, but also in the term 'the discourse of invention' the way that the intertextual turn can provide a mimesis of the process of both reading and writing. I have shown that such a mimesis of process permeates Jones's work, particularly at its most metafictional.

Jones's work is complex and filled with ideas, invention and wonderful metaphoric word-play. In this study, however, I have found three concepts that dominate her work, running through all her novels and her non-fiction writing about her own process. The first is that the truth can have many shapes. Her dialogic and allusive use of myth, legends, and previous literary works demonstrates this over and over again. The second is that another world lies behind this one, a world of enchantment and wonder that is accessible through the creative imagination, and through reading. The third, connected to the second, is that writing creates an *experience* for the reader, and that experience can include the reader visiting that world of enchantment.

The most potent symbol, among many, of this world of enchantment is Jones's story of the 'other garden' of her childhood, which has already appeared in this thesis but which I wish to return to here. In the conference centre where her family lived when Jones was a child (the basis of the school described in *Time of the Ghost*), there were two gardens. One was boring, designed in straight lines, consisting mostly of grass and bedding plants. The other was behind a wall, accessible only with a key provided by her father, and access was not often granted. This garden was, as Jones describes it, like a garden in folktales, filled with apple trees, roses and bees. She equates the two gardens explicitly with the two sides of

³⁷ Steven Vine, *Reinventing the Sublime. Post-Romantic Literature and Theory* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2013), p 12.

the human brain, and the 'other garden' with the world of the creative imagination. Her vision of the 'other garden', she writes, is 'a perfect analogue of what a good book [...] should be,' and that '[a] good book should be another place, beyond ordinary life and quite different from it, made with care and containing marvels. But though it is beyond everyday life, it is by no means unconnected with it'.³⁸ Finally, she argues, 'the mere fact of having taken your mind to another place for a while means, if that place is sufficiently wonderful, means that you come back with *experience*'.³⁹

The titular *cwidder* in *Cart and Cwidder* has inscribed on it the words 'I walk in two worlds'. In one episode in the final book of the Dalemark quartet, striking a note on the *cwidder* takes Moril and Mitt into the 'other' world that lies behind the mundane one they normally inhabit. Moril describes it as 'the place where the stories are'. That is the 'other garden'. That is the land of 'Bristolial' behind the distorting glass in *Deep Secret*. That is the Bannus Field in *Hexwood*, or indeed Banners Wood itself. That is the mythosphere. It is the river where the fish swim in dark water. Through her writing and through the connections she makes with a multiverse of myth and story, Jones's work provides us with access to that place, the place where the stories are, and to an experience that can be as rich and strange as our own imaginations can achieve. And we will not, as so often before, be let down, told that all was just a dream or see the mundane world 'restored' at the end except for an elite few. Jones leaves the possibility of wonder open for all, and gives us hope that, indeed, Arthur does still sleep somewhere ready to save the world when needed.

³⁸ Jones, 'Whirlwind Tour', p. 194.

³⁹ Jones, 'Whirlwind Tour', p. 195.

Appendix A: Identities in *Hexwood*

“Real” Name	Bannus Identity	Intertextual Association
Reigner One: Orm Pender	Dragon	Earthsea: Dragon of Pendor
Reigner Two	Ambitas	Fisher King
Reigner Three	Morgan La Trey	Morgan La Faye
Reigner Four	Sir Fors	Galahad, Gawain, Sir Bors
Reigner Five	Monk	Hermit, “wild man of the forest”
Arthur Pendragon	Artigal	Arthur, Spenser’s Artegall
Sir John Bedford	Sir Bedefer	Bedivere, Spenser’s Red Cross Knight
Mordion Agenos	Himself	Fisher King, Merlin, Artegall, Lancelot, Gandalf, Ged, Mordred
Vierran	Ann Veronica Stavely	Lady of Shallot, Vivian, Britomart
Martellian Pender	Hume	Merlin, Odin, young Arthur, poss. Bilbo Baggins
Fitela Wolfson	Martin	Fitela, poss. a hobbit.

The Voices: There is another important layer of naming in the novel: Vierran, as well as her alter-ego Ann, hears ‘voices’, and we learn that Vierran’s father also did so. The voices are not given names; rather, they are identified to us and to each other through somewhat Jungian roles. So, Ann/Vierran is ‘girl’, Arthur is ‘the king’, Martellian is ‘boy’, and Mordion is ‘the prisoner’.

Appendix B: The Myth of Kingship

	Prohibition	Exposure at Birth	Fostering	Recognition/Overthrow of True Parent and ascension to throne
Oedipus	Oracle	Left on hillside	Rescued by shepherd, fostered	Kills father, marries mother to become king of Thebes
Cyrus, King of Persia (in Herodotus)	Prophetic dreams of father	Exposed in Box	Oxherd	Overthrow of Astyages
Romulus and Remus	Mother vestal virgin – raped	Put in a tub in the Tiber	She-wolf	Recognition by Grandfather, Romulus takes throne from usurper
Moses	Mother forbidden child by law. Prophetic dream	Bull-rushes	Pharaoh's daughter	Saviour of people from Egyptian regime
Arthur	Mother 'raped' by Uther Pendragon	Given to Merlin	Raised in obscurity	Sword in Stone, becomes King
Mordred	Conceived in incestuous union with A's half-sister	Escaped slaughter of newborns	Raised in more-or-less obscurity	Kills Arthur and is himself slain
Mordion Agenos	<i>Orm Pender vs Bannus choice</i>		<i>Isolated; trained to be assassin</i>	<i>After trial by Bannus, kills Orm Pender and becomes new 'Reigner One' in his place</i>

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