Dreamers and Critical Thinkers: Landscape as Narrative Strategy in Contemporary Contiguous Fantasies for Children

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on a number of contemporary contiguous fantasies for children, books in which the fantastic is set in the real world of consensus reality. It explores how these texts deploy landscape and argues these contemporary novels use landscape as a means to subvert earlier conceptions of how children's fantasy and children themselves interact with conceptions of place. Since children are often uncritically associated with the past and the primitive, this dissertation focuses on texts that subvert this paradigm by questioning what spaces children belong in, what places are appropriate for the uses of fantasy, and how past children's fantasies have embraced nostalgia through their pastoral, rural, and pseudo-medieval landscapes. In the first chapter, I examine Rick Riordan's *Kane Chronicles* and argue that Riordan's text, by focusing on ancient Egyptian forms and structures within the North American landscape, privileges American spaces and places in a genre that has long been associated with European and British landscapes. My second chapter focuses on Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart* trilogy, in particular its urban London setting, which takes the child out of the gardens and pastoral spaces of traditional British children's literature and places the child protagonist within urban "Un-London" where the statues of the city are animate characters. Here, among all of London's statuary, Fletcher's text privileges statues that represent unexpected layers of that city's deep palimpsest. My final chapter examines several texts including R.L. LaFevers' *Theodosia Throckmorton* series and Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife* to focus on children in the space of the museum, a space traditionally represented in children's literature as a realm of adult authority. Rather than accepting the curation of the museum as static and unyielding, these texts offer examples

of critical child consumers whose arcane and material knowledge of the artifacts questions the historical narrative that they represent. Through these readings, I argue that landscape (especially for children) is constructed just as childhood is constructed and each of these texts enacts a kind of curation that steps out of monolithic or uncritical nostalgic readings of time and place, interrogating both the place of the child in space and the way the past is presented to children.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Dreamers and Critical Thinkers

I want to remember, when I am old, that this summer I stood high on the Iron Age hill-fort, with eyebright and milkwort and blue and copper butterflies at my feet, and watched kestrels hang at eye level against green Dorset. And .... [from] the end of the Cobb at Lyme Regis you could look back at a sparkling pink and white sea front tucked against a hillside not unrecognizably different from the prints of a hundred years ago.

—Penelope Lively, *The Presence of the Past*

Children are tough, though we tend to think of them as fragile. They have to be tough. Childhood is not easy. We sentimentalize children, but they know what's real and what's not. They understand metaphor and symbol. If children are different from us, they are more spontaneous. Grown-up lives have become overlaid with dross.

—Maurice Sendak

I have always been discomfited by the ending of C.S. Lewis' beloved classic *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). After Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy defeat the White Witch and become kings and queens of Narnia, they have a long reign there, seemingly an entire lifetime, but, one day, "they came back through the door and found themselves in England again, [and] it all seemed to have taken no time at all" (*Prince Caspian* 1). I can still picture the scene on my scratchy videotape of the BBC's 1988 television adaptation: chasing a white stag, the adult actors of the epilogue in their capes and crowns dismount from their beautiful horses and step into a mysterious thicket past the "pillar of iron with a lantern set on the top therof" (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 183). Immediately afterwards, the four child actors unceremoniously tumble out of the wardrobe in their gray knee socks and vests, all their finery gone and their regal expedition replaced by the fear that the housekeeper may find them. At the beginning of the next book in the series, *Prince Caspian* (1951), they are "sitting on a seat at a railway

station with trunks and playboxes piled up round them" (1) back in their roles as children and back in mundane reality, as if Lewis had erased their previous game and set them back at the starting point.

While the children do get to go to Narnia again (and their first trip gave them some knowledge of the rules of magic there), there's something alienating—and undignified—about their return. One moment they are King Peter the Magnificent, Queen Susan the Gentle, King Edmund the Just, and Queen Lucy the Valiant, who "lived in great joy and if ever they remembered their life in this world it was only as one remembers a dream" (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 181), and the next moment they are four school children, expelled from their pseudo-medieval paradise and lacking the agency that had been bestowed on them by both experience and crowns. There is a flatness that comes with the nostalgia in this kind of quest narrative. Once the kings and queens have been restored, the circle has been closed, and the children are back in their lives, left with little but dreams.

The return to consensus reality—that which we, as readers, agree is reality—breaks the illusion of the fantasy, and, by doing so, can cast a shadow upon the entire adventure.[1] Suddenly, the great kings and queens are sentimentalized children. This dissonance is more than adult bodies suddenly becoming children's bodies. That, as adults, they had "talked in quite a different style now, having been Kings and Queens for so long" (182) suddenly seems like an affectation, as if they were just playacting and must drop their game of pretend and trudge towards the Professor's office to confess to

[1] In Lewis' case, he makes the line between consensus reality and the fantasy world of Narnia clear with the phrase "this world" (181). Clearly, his pronoun choice intimates to readers that the Pevensie children live in their world.

losing the fur coats that they first borrowed when they entered the wardrobe all those years and moments ago. While the Professor—Digory Kirke from *The Magician's Nephew*—appears to believe them and gives them the hope that they will someday make it back to Narnia, there is a jarring disconnect between living a long life in one world and then suddenly having it stripped away. In "Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction," Sarah Gilead points out some of the problems with this kind of return narrative in children's fantasy texts:

> The simple aesthetics of parallel or circular narrative framing may function for obvious interpretations but falter on closer scrutiny. The familiarity and self-evident validity of both process (return) and ontological locus (reality) reassure the reader. At the same time, the return almost inevitably requires a reinterpretation (even a radical one) of the fantasy and may embody a metaliterary comment on the work's cogency or purpose… often such a reading noticeably simplifies the fantasy's rich and multiple meanings (the misprision tending to give itself away by a patronizing or sentimental tone). (Gilead 81-2)[2]

The rich colours of the children's Narnian adventure seemed paled to me even then, as a child reader, by the simplification that such an abrupt return and the "patronizing or sentimental tone" (82) Lewis' epilogue enacts. The expulsion all at once reinforces the

[2] Gilead's assertion here recalls Colin Manlove's definition of fantasy. He suggests that something is not fantasy if it is "possible to wholly explain the impossible away" (5); "[n]or again, where the supernatural is seen as a symbolic extension of the purely human mind is the work in which it appears a fantasy" (6). He quotes Tolkien, who insists that "since the fairy story deals with 'marvels,' it cannot tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story in which they occur is a figment or illusion" (qtd. in Manlove 6). In "On Fairy Stories," Tolkien expands on this idea, arguing that "The peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" (Tolkien 14).

feeling that the children had no choice and no agency throughout the story. Narnia—or Aslan or prophecies written centuries ago or deep ageless magic—made their decisions for them. The pseudo-medieval world of Narnia, with all its attendant romance nostalgia, suddenly seems disappointingly unreal. The wonder is disrupted, and the children's displacement is a teleological distraction from Narnia's true mysteries.

In his examination of epilogues in children's fantasy literature, Mike Cadden shows that the device of the epilogue (which he points out has become rare in adult literature but is alive and well in literature for children) plays a similar and often concurrent role to Gilead's description of the return. These narrative frames, both epilogue and return, are often forced upon children's stories by the well-meaning adult who wants the child to be assured of a happy ending: "the distance between beginning and end is measured by a sense of cause and effect; the distance between the end and epilogue in children's fantasy is measured by the adult's desire that the reader be comforted at all literary costs" (Cadden 355). Both the reassuring epilogue and the normalizing return from a fantastic Otherworld are expectations of a genre that often seeks to comfort its readers at the expense of the child protagonist's agency and the reader's belief. As a child reader, I had (and still have) no problem entering a world populated with fawns, giants, and talking lions, but I did (and still do) take issue with being asked to believe that Susan wouldn't be terribly angry that she was a queen one moment and a passive child again the next. No one is that well behaved.[3]

[3] However, as Philip Pullman suggests in his oft-criticized *Guardian* essay on the occasion of C.S. Lewis' centenary, "The Darkside of Narnia," later in the series Susan is not well enough behaved in the way that the Narnian vision requires. She is rejected from Salvation in *The Last Battle* as "no longer a friend of Narnia" because she "always was a jolly sight too keen on being grown up" (*The Last Battle* 135). As Susan tries on "nylons and lipstick and invitations" (135), her interest in becoming grown up and making decisions for herself in consensus reality brands her as a traitor to the Narnian vision which insists that the immersive fantasy must continue to stunt her growth and trump her sexual agency. Pullman puts it bluntly:

As a consequence of this discontent, this dissertation focuses on children's fantasies that offer a different experience for their child protagonists and would have made childhood me much happier. In the various series that I examine, the fantasy is not set in a place that is "long ago and faraway" or through a wardrobe or down a rabbit hole. Instead, these books are set in real world landscapes that challenge earlier conceptions of how children's fantasy and children themselves interact with conceptions of place. The consequence is that the child protagonists take a more active part in the stories around them. They are not props for a nostalgic vision of restoration. Instead, they have a heightened level of agency, something my nine-year-old reader-self would have enjoyed immensely. Each of the fantasies that I examine here places its fantastic elements within the recognizable world of consensus reality and has significant interaction with locatable places, making the stakes—if not the fantasy—seem more real; therefore, it takes the child protagonist more seriously, rejecting the coddling and sentimentalizing that can affect the representation of child protagonists. I start with Jane Suzanne Carroll's assertion in *Landscape in Children's Literature* that "landscape is not merely an unnoticed background to the text but is a powerful medium in the production of meaning and action in a text" (13) and go on to argue that setting children's fantasy in non-traditional landscapes can push back against the nostalgia that is often the bedrock of the genre, and this rejection of nostalgia can open up possibilities for child protagonists to question the world around them. When child protagonists are in a setting that rejects or at the very least complicates the nostalgic landscapes of the past, they must confront the

"Susan, who did want to grow up, and who might have been the most interesting character in the whole cycle if she'd been allowed to, is a Cinderella in a story where the Ugly Sisters win" ("The Darkside of Narnia").

many layers of history in the landscape around them, and this confrontation is not simple and straight-forward; rather, it gives the child protagonist and the reader a sense of the messy and often competing strata of history.

Each of the books that I examine interacts with landscapes that are familiar and realistic, but they each have a layer of fantasy. Each of the settings is, in some way, unconventional, whether it is unexpectedly bringing Old World myths into American cities or rejecting typically child-friendly spaces of parks and gardens and placing child protagonists in gritty urban spaces. In Rick Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles*, comprising *The Red Pyramid* (2010), *The Serpent's Shadow* (2011), and *The Throne of Fire* (2012), the young protagonists are mainly situated in Brooklyn, New York, which acts as their home base for travels to locations as varied as Cairo, Paris, and London; however, the book I am most interested in, *The Red Pyramid*, makes its main focus a journey across the continental USA with stops in places like New York; Washington, D.C.; Memphis; and Phoenix. Siblings Carter and Sadie Kane discover that they have inherited magical powers, and they struggle against the Ancient Egyptian god Set who attempts to rewrite his own myth by taking over America. Along the way, the Kane children uncover mysteries and helpers as they visit sites across the USA that have Ancient Egyptian resonances, such as the glass pyramid stadium in Nashville and the giant obelisk of the Washington Monument. I argue that Riordan's text enacts an unexpected type of curation in the larger landscape. By privileging Ancient Egyptian forms and structures within the North American landscape, the *Kane Chronicles* prioritizes American spaces within a fantasy genre that has long been associated with European and British landscapes. Refusing to rely merely on the nostalgia of "authentic" antiquities and structures,

Riordan's text gives power to American recreations and anachronisms, upending expectations of which strata of the palimpsest can be used to represent the fantastic.

In Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart* trilogy, comprising *Stoneheart* (2006), *Ironhand* (2007), and *Silvertongue* (2008), the action of all three novels takes place in the streets of contemporary London, where the two protagonists, George and Edie, are trapped in 'Un-London,' a layer of London where the statues of the city are alive and a force called the Darkness (along with its villainous human helper, the cursed and immortal John Dee) is threatening humans and statues alike. Here, among all of London's statuary, Fletcher's text privileges statues that represent unexpected layers of that city's deep layers. Rather than statues associated with childhood or kings and queens that represent a nostalgic and conservative version of history, Fletcher's trilogy focuses on statues from difficult and unexpected times in London's past, another form of curation that gives its child protagonists a more complex view of history than do previous children's fantasies.

In the final chapter, I look at children's fantasies set (at least in part) in museums: R.L. LaFevers' *Theodosia* series, particularly *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos* (2007), set in Edwardian London, where Theodosia spends her time in the museum where her parents are curators, nullifying curses that are attached to the antiquities that they import, and Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife* (1997), especially the parts that are set in contemporary Oxford. While the curation of objects in museums engages with the palimpsest of history, children are often left on the other side of the glass cases, presented with the monolithic version of history presented by the encyclopedic museums that are traversed by so many child protagonists. Rather than accepting the curation of the museum as static and unyielding, these texts offer examples of savvy child protagonists

whose arcane and material knowledge of the artifacts questions the narratives museums present, again embracing a complex view of the many layers of history available to the child protagonists.

By looking at books that do otherwise, I suggest that the impulse to contain children's fantasy in pseudo-medieval Otherworlds, in bounded spaces, and in return narratives is often seeded by nostalgia. After all, in many ways, both children's literature and fantasy literature are invested in the past, whether it is the past of an adult's childhood or the past of myth and legend. Bringing together the threads of both, children's fantasy is doubly invested: children's literature often relies upon the author's nostalgia for childhood (and the construction of the child as a nostalgic figure), and fantasy often relies upon the nostalgia inherent in the Manichean journey within a pseudo-medieval or ancient Otherworld. This nostalgia (and the sentimentalizing that often accompanies it) can constrict the possibilities for the child protagonist to both question the world around them and to enjoy agency within that world. The texts that I examine place children in landscapes that redefine—or at the very least question—the role of the child in national, urban, and local spaces. If time is a palimpsest written into the strata of the landscape, these texts reach for unexpected layers of representation, rewriting expectations of how children's fantasies interact with time and space. In what I call "contiguous fantasies," those fantasies set in consensus reality, the deployment of landscape can open up opportunities for radical questioning: What spaces belong to children? What happens when children trespass into adult spaces? When child protagonists interact with landscape without the mediation of child-friendly spaces, what can they learn about the layers of history embedded in the palimpsest of landscape? How

can interacting with the world offer child protagonists opportunities to discover and employ their agency?

1.1: Contiguous Fantasy

I'll begin to answer these questions by first introducing the concept of "contiguous fantasy." Each of the fantasies that I examine here places its fantastic elements within the recognizable world, whether that is racing through Central Park in New York to escape an angry Ancient Egyptian goddess, meeting with statue allies at Hyde Park Corner in London, or questioning the display of artifacts at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford having travelled from another world. At a base level, what these books have in common is that they interact with landscapes that are familiar and that each has a layer of fantasy. I have chosen the word "contiguous" for these fantasies because it speaks to the *layering* of reality and fantasy. Aristotle's "Law of Contiguity" suggests that things that are close to each other in space and time become associated with one another, while in geography, "contiguity" presumes spaces that are uninterrupted (the continental U.S. is referred to as the "contiguous" 48 states); rather than being separated by a portal, set in a separate world or relegated to specific bounded spaces, the fantasy world in each of these books is just below the surface, layered within and entwined with the world their readers live in. This is important because when the fantasy works within the confines of reality, it offers an opportunity for the child protagonist to learn about the rules of the fantasy while learning equally valuable lessons about the real world.

Landscape, or, rather the "edge of landscape" as Bruce A. Ronda puts it, is a major element in children's literature:

> There is a characteristic moment in many English and American novels for children, a moment so powerful and central that it defines an image of the child in those texts: the child stands on the edge of the landscape, poised, even frozen, in liminal time and space. One thinks of Peter on the Darlings' windowsill, the animals at the edge of the Wild Wood, Mary outside the secret garden, Alice or Dorothy at the edge of the unknown. This characteristic moment, even gesture, suggests other dimensions of transition: from dependence to independence, from conventionality to forms of self-knowledge, from the known *to the unknown*. (Ronda 257)

However, the degree to which a protagonist can move "from conventionality to forms of self-knowledge" can depend upon the opportunities available after they take that first step into the unknown. To return to my earlier example, Susan Pevensie, once she grows too old for Narnia, goes on with her ordinary life with no more room for sudden adventures. Her knowledge of Narnia fades and is safely left behind in that Otherworld. There is no evidence that the lessons learned in the fantasy world impact how she moves forward with her life. However, in contiguous fantasy, there are remaining questions. Even when the adventure is finished, the fantasy elements have left their mark on consensus reality; this can open up questions about the stability of consensus reality and its interpretation. At the end of the novel, the protagonists of contiguous fantasy carry knowledge that allows them to interpret the world differently because they have learned about fantasy and about the real world. While the portal fantasy may create dreamers, the contiguous fantasy creates critical thinkers. The coming of age narrative is at once metaphorical and practical. "Contiguous" is also a fitting term because landscape itself is made of layers:

layers of rock and soil as well as memory and imagination. As my discussion focuses on how landscape can drive the meaning and action of the text, I often use the metaphor of the palimpsest to describe both the physical and metaphorical depths of the landscapes in these texts: landscape, in this sense, contains the strata of geological and narrative history, and the fantasy is a part of that palimpsest. It is a contiguous seam.

When I discuss the real world, I use the term "consensus reality" taken from Kathryn Hume, whose sweeping definition of the fantastic in *Fantasy and Mimesis* "as any departure from consensus reality" (21) is at the heart of many of the debates over the last 40 years about what precisely we mean when we invoke "fantasy" as a generic label. However, although this study doesn't enter those debates, fantasy, as Brian Attebery and Farah Mendlesohn have both suggested, is a matter of "fuzzy sets" of generic relationships. However, we can start from the broad definition that fantasy relies on the impossible (as opposed to the possibility of science fiction), and we can broadly identify some clear resonances if we approach children's fantasy, in particular, from the perspective of landscape. My specific interest here lies in how fantastic elements, those defining characteristics central to Hume's simple definition, interact with the landscapes of consensus reality within fantasies for children. To keep things clear, I will not rely on the term "secondary world" to define worlds that are apart from consensus reality, as the term is already the subject of some confusion. J.R.R. Tolkien used the term to mean any coherent fictional world, but discussions of fantasy have tended to misappropriate it to mean worlds that are separate from consensus reality, like Narnia or Middle Earth.[4] With

[4] Although the term "secondary world" is often used to indicate a high fantasy setting, Tolkien's first use of the term in *Tree and Leaf* shows that it does not prescribe any particular setting, but only insists that any fictional setting carry its own internal logic:

> What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator.' He makes a

that in mind, I'll refer to obviously separate worlds as "Otherworlds." I also do not intend for *consensus reality* to mean what Stefan Ekman, in *Here Be Dragons: Exploring Fantasy Maps and Settings*, calls the "actual world (the world inhabited by the reader and writer)" (10) as distinct from the representational world depicted in fiction. Instead, I use *consensus reality* as a general nexus between the actual world and what Ekman calls the "primary world" which "is a general literary construct whose setting imitates, on a general level if not in every detail, the actual world" (10). That consensus reality could be the here and now (or, occasionally, the past) of the world that we agree is real is an important distinction in children's fantasy that offers the possibility that fantasy could exist in tandem with the world of the child reader. Part of the magic of these contiguous fantasies is the idea that the statues of London could move, that Egyptian gods may be right around the corner, and that artifacts in a museum could actually contain curses; therefore, the distinction between "actual" and "primary" is not necessarily useful here as in a study of fantasies that move between and beyond consensus reality to those Otherworlds that Ekman's work is primarily concerned with.

> Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. (Tolkien 37)

For Tolkien then, "secondary world" clearly doesn't specify an entirely imagined landscape like those of Middle Earth or Earthsea. As Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz have pointed out, Tolkien's conception of the "secondary world" refers to the consistency the author must adhere to within any fictional world and is consistent with his mentor George MacDonald's thoughts in "The Fantastic Imagination." MacDonald suggests that fiction frees the writer from natural laws by allowing him or her to create his or her own laws: "His world once invented, the highest law that comes next into play is, that there shall be harmony between the laws by which the new world has begun to exist […]. The moment he forgets one of them, he makes the story, by its own postulates, incredible. To be able to live a moment in an imagined world, we must see the laws of its existence obeyed" ("The Fantastic Imagination"). The challenge that Tolkien takes from MacDonald's lesson is the enormous burden of detail that reinforces what he sees as the consistency of his worlds: maps, languages, histories and lineages that make up the intensely intricate latticework of Middle Earth. Hunt and Lenz have clearly made this point, saying that the long-standing use of 'secondary world' as a term that defines a separate world from this one is a misreading: "[f]or Tolkien, all imaginary worlds—all fictions—are 'Secondary'" (14). Thus, the term "Otherworld," as used by numerous scholars, is preferable.

Many critics have defined fantasy, with the larger categories generally being "high" and "low" fantasies, or fantasies set in a distinct Otherworld and fantasies that somehow place the fantastic within consensus reality.[5] Since contiguous fantasies generally belong in this larger category of "low" fantasy, it's worth considering its contours.[6] In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Attebery points to the difficulty of defining this broad subgenre: "Of all the subgenres to emerge in recent years, the one that promises to reshape the genre most significantly is as yet unnamed, or rather no name for it has proved adequate" (126). Critics have used several names to try to distinguish fantasy set in consensus reality from those set in Otherworlds: "Sometimes called 'low fantasy,' sometimes 'real world fantasy' or 'modern urban fantasy,' it is characterized by the avoidance of the enclosed fantasy worlds dominant in earlier fantasies, from Lewis Carroll's Wonderland to Ursula K. LeGuin's Earthsea" (126).[7] He goes on to give a basic definition: "Instead, these fantasies describe settings that seem to be real, familiar, present-day places, except that they contain the magical characters and impossible events of fantasy" (126). Attebery settles on the term *indigenous fantasy*, "that is to say, this is fantasy that is, like an indigenous species, adapted to and reflective of its natural

[5] High fantasy—also referred to as epic fantasy— is most often associated with a story told in a completely fictional world of the type expressed by J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, and it is typified by both the use of magic and the scope of the adventure's world-threatening stakes. Writers, critics, and fans often see Tolkien as the high-water mark of world building. His presence is felt in sweeping quests and in the small details of maps and appendices. However, fantasy has also enjoyed a flourishing number of sub-genres whose landscapes often look little like the pseudo-medieval epic fantasy also referred to as "Sword and Sorcery." Steampunk, urban fantasy, science fantasy, magic realism, feminist fantasy, paranormal fantasy, alternate history, Regency fantasy, time slip and neo-gothic are just some of the sub-genres claiming shelf space in fantasy sections of bookstores. These fantasies are set in a variety of worlds including this one. In contrast to the definition of "true" fantasy as "high fantasy" that slavishly follows a "Sword and Sorcery" formula, fantasy is not constrained by its lineage.

[6] As Maria Nikolajeva points out, the connotations of quality inherent in these terms cannot help but impinge on their usefulness. Instead, she suggests the terms *closed world*, *open world* and *implied world*. The crux of these definitions is contact or lack of contact with consensus reality.

[7] Interesting, here, that the examples that Attebery gives are children's books (relying on them as the Ur-texts of the genre).

environment" (129). While the term itself isn't useful in a North American context (it's too easily mistaken for fantasy written by indigenous peoples of which there is a rich history tied to oral traditions), Attebery's assertion that this kind of fantasy is "adapted to and reflective of" the environment is central to my approach to these fantasies. While I'd suggest that fantasy can have a number of varying environments that work together (again, making the "indigenous species" metaphor less helpful), the essential point here is that the setting informs the fantasy in many ways, great and small.

"Low" and "high" are wide-sweeping labels that are so broad as to make them almost useless, which is why critics have attempted to break down types of fantasy even further. In *Rhetorics of Fantasy,* Mendlesohn, whose work clearly follows from (although often gently disagreeing with) Attebery's, identifies four categories of fantastic texts depending on how the protagonists access the fantastic: "[i]n the portal quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* xiv). While contiguous fantasy may seem to best fit into her "intrusion fantasy" category—if the fantastic intrudes into the real world of consensus reality—Mendlesohn is clear that the intrusion may happen within an Otherworld.[8] As her focus is on rhetoric, Mendlesohn's categories are not bounded by geography, and don't necessarily work for my focus on landscape as the defining factor in the fantasy. As Mendlesohn herself notes, her

[8] Giving examples including the White Witch, an "intruder from another world," in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mendlesohn suggests that her category is not confined to consensus reality (what she calls "the primary world"): "Granted, the intrusion rhetoric seems best hosted in the primary world—perhaps because in this mode the contrast between the mundane and the intruding fantastic can be heightened—but in practice, immersive fantasies can host an intrusion" (114).

taxonomy "needs to be understood as a tool, not an end in itself, and it needs to be understood in the modern context that taxonomical practices are increasingly polysemic and multiplex, generated by acknowledged questions and capable of existence alongside other configurations" (xv).[9] Despite the lack of clear geographical borders, Mendlesohn's distinction between modes of fantasy is useful because there is some indication that *where* the fantasy lies, among other factors, can drive fantasy and have an impact on its rhetorical positioning.

The impact of setting on the parameters of the fantasy (and the flexibility of Mendlesohn's multiple taxonomic configurations) is made explicit in *Children's Fantasy Literature* where Mendlesohn and Michael Levy briefly identify what they call "locationally cryptic" fantasy that "takes a city or location familiar to the child but either imposes upon it a strange supernatural topography or takes us through to a mirror world" (179). This idea of "imposition" is a pertinent one as contiguous fantasies clearly manifest a symbiotic relationship between the mundane and the fantastic. The fantasy imposes itself on real world settings, making the mundane (a statue, a building, a museum artifact) fantastic, but it isn't a wholly created magic; instead, these fantasies draw from the mysterious, the forgotten, and the mythic already in the landscape around us. Mendlesohn and Levy identify Fletcher's *Stoneheart* (2006), China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* (2007), and Tom Pollock's *The City's Son* (2012) as examples, suggesting, "The best locationally cryptic fantasies make use of the archaeological and legendary layers of the world around them, and many are set in London" (179). Not only do contiguous

[9] Mendelsohn's epigraph states "HEALTH WARNING: This book is not meant to create rules. Its categories are not intended to fix anything in stone. This book is merely a portal into fantasy, a tour around the skeletons and exoskeletons of a genre" (iii).

fantasies impose fantastic elements, but they also draw from the narrative magic already at work within the built and archaeological environments around us. And London is, of course, an obvious palette for these sorts of layered impressionistic strokes. The tangible stratified material histories of London's topography make it a worthy foundation, and the city already occupies a position within the cultural imagination as one that mixes history, story, and reality. However, Mendlesohn and Levy's term "locationally cryptic" doesn't quite work to explain this relationship. While *Un Lun Dun* offers a narrative within consensus reality that moves into a fantastic mirror world, *The City's Son* and *Stoneheart* stay in the real world throughout.[10] However, while *The City's Son* focuses its action on the subterranean and the marginal spaces of London—garbage dumps, train tracks, industrial sites—*Stoneheart* focuses on the heart of that city itself, the square mile that demarcates ancient London.[11] Its topography is "strange and supernatural" in that the layer of Un-London endows the statues of London with life and movement, but they are

[10] *Stoneheart* includes several short time travel-type episodes in which Edie, the female child protagonist, witnesses events that took place in the past by "glinting" (using a mysterious power that comes from touching objects that are over-written with painful or strong memory). The series also includes an episode in which the protagonists enter the past through John Dee's magic mirrors and visit London's last Frost Fair in 1814. In another short episode in the *Stoneheart* series, George visits the memory of a soldier statue and finds himself in a French battlefield in World War One, again, a locatable geographical space in the past of consensus reality. However, these episodes do not occupy a large part of the narrative, and each one is also set in London and its environs' actual history rather than an Otherworld or mirror world. Mirror worlds often share the basic geography and other characteristics of consensus reality but differ substantially in large and small ways; in *Un Lun Dun*, the "other" London is full of animate objects and fantastical creatures and characters; it is separate and bears little resemblance to consensus reality. In another example, Rachel Caine's *The Great Library* series (2015-2017) places the action in a mirror world that has familiar London streets but the world is ruled by the Great Library of Alexandria (which never burned down), an authoritarian institution that forbids anyone from owning books. These mirror worlds often suggest an alternate history rather than a fantastic element intertwined with recognizable consensus reality.

[11] While there is most certainly interesting work to be done on the contiguous fantasies that place the action in liminal urban spaces, *Stoneheart* is more appropriate for a reading in the context of this dissertation because *The City's Son* deals less with accessible public spaces and recognizable landscapes, and it also fits squarely into the YA genre (as defined by Mendlesohn and Levy) because its protagonists are in their late teen years. Since I am comparing my protagonists to earlier child protagonists, I have tried to choose books that feature children who are in the middle age range (14 is the oldest of the protagonists in the main books under study here). The protagonists of *Stoneheart* are 12.

the statues of London nonetheless, bounded by familiar streets, buildings, and the bridges of the Thames. Fletcher's fantasy is contiguous because it forms another layer that is not separated from the known landscape.[12] Rather than being "locationally cryptic," which denotes some kind of mystery about where precisely the setting lies, I'd suggest that *Stoneheart,* in particular*,* is *locationally precise*, so much so that readers can trace George and Edie's travels through the city quite easily. The same cannot be said for the mirror worlds of particularly Miéville's book. There is room to read the contiguous fantasy episodes in books that are otherwise mainly situated in mirror worlds or Otherworlds, and reading the elements of contiguous fantasy is a fruitful way into specific books such as *The Subtle Knife,* which sets much of its action within a series of Otherworlds but also uses consensus reality Oxford as a nexus within its multiverse, which I address in Chapter 4.[13] However, most of the books that I am interested in here are clearly anchored in consensus reality for the main part of the action.

The locational preciseness of these contiguous fantasies is an essential element that ties back to Attebery's definition. Each of these contiguous fantasies works because it is overlaid and intertwined with particular landscapes, and they are "adapted to and reflective of" (129) the layers of history and meaning that those landscapes have accrued. Since this relationship with the complexities of history can manifest itself in unexpected ways, it is worth examining how landscapes have been figured in children's fantasy in the

[12] Levy and Mendlesohn do not comment upon Riordan's *Kane Chronicles* series within their overview of children's fantasy, though they do mention the connected series, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, in terms of the role destiny plays in a number of contemporary fantasies for children. The Riordan series that I discuss in Chapter 2 has some episodes in which the protagonists travel to magical spaces, but the first book of the series, *The Red Pyramid,* keeps the main thrust of its action within locatable landscapes.

[13] In *His Dark Materials*, Pullman uses precise locations in Oxford that have an impact on the narrative strategy of the series both because of the distinct uses the books make of Oxford settings but also because Lyra's world is an alternative-history Oxford and the resonances between the two worlds open up mysteries of human civilization and history with our world.

past, how critics have approached landscape in children's fantasy, and how the novels I consider treat landscape differently. This blending of contiguity with portal worlds, a breaking down of traditional fantasy boundaries, is a trend in recent children's fantasy literature because of the more complex treatment of coming of age that reveals less in metaphorical lessons about the supposed nature of adulthood and more in concrete discoveries about the flaws of consensus reality.

1.2: What spaces belong to children's fantasy?

Since this dissertation argues that such contiguous fantasies place child protagonists in unconventional spaces, it's important to establish the conventions with which they are breaking. First, as I explore in Chapter 2, children's fantasy in English is often set in Britain. This may seem like an expected consequence of the genre's first Golden Age (1860-1920) being mainly a British phenomenon, but there are more factors at play. As Attebery has thoroughly traced in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature* and I discuss further in Chapter 2, the history of fantasy in America is one of resistance with exceptions such as the morally sanctioned allegories of Milton and John Bunyan, tales that ended with rationalization (mechanics that explain away with the fantastic elements of the story), and, later, fantasies set at a remove from the American landscape such as fantastic Otherworlds that look an awful lot like pseudo-medieval England. As Mendlesohn and Levy put it, "A writer who wished to produce something both American and fantastic, and to root his creation, as did the British fantasists, in his native lore, had to move against the current, restoring what had been lost over the years or finding eddies of tradition that had resisted the general erosion of the marvelous" (51).

The surge in canonical children's fantasy works in the Victorian and Edwardian periods paired with an America's past reluctance to embrace the fantastic has influenced generations of readers and writers of children's fantasies in English to imagine the proto-typical landscape of children's fantasy to be an English countryside either set in an imagined medieval era or influenced by pseudo-medieval conventions.[14]

The expectation is so well known by readers of fantastic genres that several authors have done convincing work parodying the conventions, just as Diana Wynne Jones does in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996), which offers entries on all the sites and experiences that a traveller in a prototypical fantasy may expect to discover such as an archetypical fantasy village: "Villages usually consist of one street with houses scattered along it, a lot of barking dogs, a smithy (see BLACKSMITHS) and, if you are lucky, an INN" (207). In her typical dry parodic style, Jones also expounds upon the types of objects and characters that may be found there, such as a *Good King*: "Good Kings are rough diamonds and the salt of the earth. They are easy to detect by their bluff manner and the lack of riches or protocol in their Court. The very best Good Kings always have their crowns on crooked" (110).[15] Whether through Dungeons and Dragons, myriad fantasy novel series or popular movie versions of Camelot and Robin Hood, the sword and sorcery trope is embedded in popular consciousness, as Susan Ang explains in

[14] When I use the term "pseudo-medieval" here, I am referring to a fictional imagining of the Middle Ages that often bears little resemblance to the actual medieval period in England other than technological primitivism and a reliance on feudal monarchal systems of government. There are some SFF books that actually attempt to place characters within the historical time period. For example, Connie Willis' *Doomsday Book* (winner of both the Hugo and Nebula Awards) sends a futuristic time-travelling historian back to the time of a plague outbreak in the 14th century. However, the pseudo-medieval is a fantasy creation that stems from the Victorian obsession with the medieval romance rather than any faithful or historical recreation of the actual Middle Ages.

[15] Another aspect of these landscapes that Mendlesohn draws attention to in her monograph on Jones's work is that "the unrolling landscape in many fantasy novels can create a feeling that nothing else outside the path taken really exists. […] The result is a world with blanks such as a medieval projection" (85).

her essay about Jones's renewal of the fantasy genre:

> That *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996) and *Dark Lord of Derkholm* (1998) could make their parodic point as easily as they did was testimony to how the genre had diminished, how reliant upon a limited number of plot elements and overfamiliar tropes it had grown. Fantasy had dwindled to become a series of clichés—for example, "fantasy" is a three-decker novel; is peopled by dark lords, tree-hugging elves, unwashed horse-lords, leather-clad barbarians, and wizards with a bad habit of returning from the dead; is propped up by ancient prophecies, medieval castles, and bric-a-brac such as magic swords, glow-in-the-dark orbs, sapphire roses, and black cauldrons for furnishing those medieval castles. (286)[16]

Fantasy has begun to break away from or more cannily deal with the tropes described by Ang, and Jones was one of the practitioners of a new brand of self-reflective fantasy that is very aware of its place within a genre that has earned scorn for its reliance on familiar motifs and settings, but this approach to the genre is a deeply embedded phenomenon.[17] Burton Hatlen expresses what most fantasy readers have known for the last fifty years:

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[16] Jones's biting YA-crossover satire, *The Dark Lord of Derkholm*, is set in a fantastical otherworld that acts as a tourism destination for people who want a real fantasy experience. The entire world is in on the façade, and, due to a debt owed to a Mr. Chesney (who controls a powerful demon), the weary citizens are forced to organize and put on an annual performance of a fantasy world so that "Pilgrim Party" tourists can experience all of the fantasy conventions that they imagine such as Dark Oracles, Evil Kings, dragons, and good and evil armies.

[17] A growing number of fantasy writers play with fantasy expectations in their novels. Overturning conventions about wise and powerful dragons, Robin Hobb's *The Rain Wild Chronicles* (2009-2013) deals with what happens when dragons have been inbred and badly treated for so long by a population who wants to use their magic that they begin to be born stunted and mentally unstable. Naomi Novik's *Uprooted* capsizes the kidnapped virgin narrative by making the young woman in question far more powerful than the supposedly evil wizard who takes her. Other than *The Dark Lord of Derkholm*, Jones's *Deep Magic* hilariously places a group of real magicians at a science fiction and fantasy convention, and when an actual centaur comes through a portal, the convention goers just assume that it's a really great piece of cosplay. These are just a few examples of a growing body of fantasies that show varying degrees of self-awareness of their own lineage.

"*The Lord of the Rings* seems, with each passing year, increasingly central to the literature of the twentieth century, establishing a new paradigm for fantasy that has haunted every later writer who has presumed to work in this genre" (Hatlen 76).[18] However, in the children's side of the genre (at the very least), there is more to the reliance on these settings than just the urge to reuse popular settings. In tandem with the popularity of these settings in fantasy genres—much of which we can trace to Tolkien—and the propensity for both American and British writers to rely on Britain as the ancestral home of fairy lands and medieval knights and damsels because of American rationalization, there is also the entwined question of nostalgia for a particular type of childhood.

Since this question of nostalgia is so intertwined with constructions of childhood and constructions of landscape, it's important to look at how nostalgia works and to set out the terms this discussion will use. For the concepts in this project, I have relied upon Svetlana Boym's two categories of nostalgia as defined in her work *The Future of Nostalgia*: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. She explains that "Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" and can produce a dangerous and uncritical reading of the past that affects the present. She describes restorative nostalgia as "not about memory and history but about heritage and tradition" (xviii), two concepts that play a large part in conservative rhetoric that seeks to undermine multicultural and progressive political agendas. The implementation of Margaret Thatcher's National Heritage Acts (linked to a call to "Put the 'Great' back

[18] Hatlen argues that Pullman's *His Dark Materials'* "secular humanist fantasy" (76) is a direct challenge to Lewis and Tolkien and that much of its inventiveness lies in "his blurring of the line that separates the 'real' from the fantasy worlds" (75).

in Great Britain") is one such example, but Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" catchphrase is an extreme manifestation of the rhetorical power of this kind of nostalgia that suggests to its audience that the past was a better time and that their morals and values are in jeopardy.[19] But Thatcher's definition of Englishness and Trump's red hats are just a new expression of a call to nostalgia that has been employed time and time again for different purposes. As Boym explains, "It's often an invented tradition—a dogmatic, stable myth that gives you a coherent version of the past. Generally it's far removed in time, even prehistoric, as in the German myths that Wagner used for his operas" (xviii). Within this type of nostalgia, age is necessarily sacrosanct, and, in Britain, there's no better example to draw from than the Matter of Britain, which is often interpreted through a longing for the restoration of a great age of 'Englishness.'[20] This type of nostalgia is often tied to place (in particular, the concept of place as seen through the lens of nationalism). But nostalgic visions of place often do not match their reality.

Boym opens her book with the example of a man from Germany who visited his family's long lost home in Königsberg (Kaliningrad).[21] While he and his wife could find few things from their memories within the former Soviet stronghold, he stopped by the

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[19] Ryan S. Trimm discusses the irony in Thatcher's appeal to heritage as a common denominator: "As such, the past became projected as that which held in common, a shared legacy that seemingly could bind a nation together even as its contemporary 'society' was publicly derided as a chimera." However, Thatcher's own economic policies showed that the "effective association of national signifiers with the residences of the well-to-do—with private property—offered a chilling echo of Margaret Thatcher's abjuration of 'society' in favour of enterprise" (138).

[20] And clearly there's great irony in this longing as the canon of Arthurian mythology draws from sources as diverse as early Welsh battle poetry, French tales of chivalry, and German court tales. There is, of course, a rich body of scholarship on the ways in which Arthuriana has been deployed through the centuries critically, uncritically, cynically, and otherwise to stir hearts and minds to a certain brand of nativism that I will not expand on here. W.A. Nitz's article on the "Exhumation of King Arthur at Glastonbury" tells the enlightening story of how Arthur and Guinevere's graves were used for political advantage over the Welsh as early as the 12th century.

[21] It is interesting that Boym herself insists on the historical name, Königsberg, for Kaliningrad, the Soviet name of which has been maintained even throughout the post-Soviet era.

Pregolya River and decided to wash his face in "the native waters." But, since the river had been the well-known dumping ground of refuse and toxic waste, "shrieking in pain, he recoiled from the Pregolya, the skin on his face burning. … The man had longed for a ritual gesture known from movies and fairy tales to mark his homecoming. He dreamed of repairing his longing with final belonging" (xiii), a sin that many of us are guilty of at some time or another. But his nostalgia literally and figuratively wounded and rejected him: "Possessed by nostalgia, he forgot his actual past. The illusion left burns on his face" (xiii). In refusing to consider the layers of history—in this case the literal waste of Soviet industrialization—at work in the landscape and only engaging with the layer he imagined and longed for, he discovered the dangers of "spatializ[ing] time" (49) with no reference to the actual history of the Pregolya River. In earlier centuries, this man may have been treated for a medical condition that led to this disturbing incident, that of the disease of nostalgia as described by Dr. Johannes Hofer in 1688 who first identified the affliction among soldiers of the Swiss garrison who could not bear to leave their home. Boym charts the movement of this "maladie du pays" across France and Russia to American Civil War soldiers as doctors discovered that the disease became more and more difficult to cure until it became a 19th-century obsession that superseded individual diagnoses and infiltrated, along the way, conceptions of childhood until, in the 20th century, possibly through sheer exhaustion at the public spectacles and monuments of nostalgia typified by Victoria's own protracted, public, and expensively monumentalized grief, it "was privatized and internalized. The longing for home shrunk to longing for one's own childhood" (53).

However, nostalgia is not always "simply bad, bad, bad" (3), as Sean Scanlan discusses in his introduction to an issue of the *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* devoted to the subject: "A nostalgic image may be eidetic or it may be blurry. Its objects or catalysts can be ineffable, forever lost, maddeningly not there, or uncannily never-was. Nostalgia is often secondary or epiphenomenal, yet it can also be Proustian and epiphanic, generative and creative" (8). As an alternative to *restorative nostalgia*, Boym defines *reflective nostalgia* as something that "thrives on *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming –wistfully, ironically, desperately." This longing is not necessarily uncritical. She suggests that in reflective nostalgia "[y]ou don't deny your longing, but you reflect on it somehow." This reflection can take many inventive and artistic forms: "[i]t's a positive force that helps us explore our experience, and can offer an alternative to an uncritical acceptance of the present" (xviii). Boym argues that both kinds of nostalgia can "use the same triggers of memory and symbols … but tell different stories about it" (49). She explains, "If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments and temporalizes space" (49). Within these two poles, we can locate a great number of currents within children's literature.

It's not difficult to locate rewritten histories meant to preserve childhood innocence and recapture and reconstruct an ideal of childhood innocence. From the didactic tales of James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1671), to Sarah Fielding's Mrs. Teachum whose reworking of fantastical tales insists that the fantastical "is only valid as a teaching device, and has little or no legitimacy or moral value in its own right" (Mendlesohn and Levy 22) to the bowdlerizers of fairy stories and editions of

Shakespeare to today's school boards that insist on banning Harry Potter, the history of children's literature is rife with attempts to rewrite and overwrite tales that are thought to be "inappropriate" for children. However, we can also find degrees of restorative nostalgia within the most popular and well-known fantasies for children. As both the children's literature and fantasy genres are so often concerned with the past or echoes of the past, the use of contiguous worlds has often been a type of *nostos*—a return—to an unattainable mythic past. Throughout the history of fantasy Otherworlds, there has been, as Hunt and Lenz point out, a "tendency to exploit pseudo-medieval settings." This tendency, they argue, "suggests a regressive element, a romantic yearning (by adults) for earlier 'innocence', for an alternative world where motivations, actions, needs and gratifications are simpler and more direct than in the desperately complex and subtle real world" (4). The escape to the rural idyll (which I discuss at further length in Chapter 3) is an enduring one and can be traced through a Victorian lineage from Thomas Carlyle's social hierarchies based on the rural rustic to John Ruskin's Golden River; however, even the Victorians' commitment to the child in nature is, at least in part, itself a construction. Marah Gubar's *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* questions how faithfully we can rely on critical and historical depictions of the Cult of Childhood and its later Victorian adherents and their obligation to an "essentializing Romantic discourse" (Plotz qtd. in Gubar 4): "While such stories comfort adults by offering a luxuriously nostalgic brand of escapism, they are problematic for children because they attempt to seduce young people into identifying with—and conforming to—a static, anti-intellectual ideal of naïve simplicity" (4). She argues that even among both Romantics and the so-called child-loving late Victorians there was a great deal of

changeability and skepticism surrounding the Cult of Childhood's conception of the child: "Golden Age authors were not only as inconsistent as the Romantics in their adherence to this sort of primitivism, they also regularly situated themselves in opposition to it" (14). The nostalgia identified here by Hunt and Lenz and complicated by Gubar can easily become restorative nostalgia when our texts, policies, and cultural constructions of and for children rely on recapturing a past ideal of innocence that is largely constructed.

Nostalgia plays a major role in fantasy fiction across all age groups, but its presence in fantasy fiction for young readers is of particular import because of the nostalgic tendencies so often associated with coming of age narratives. A petrified vision of the Romantic child continues to pervade our cultural sense of childhood, and, as is the nature of nostalgia, even when we are most self-conscious that this Romantic child did not exist, a psychic aching for this absence maintains a hold on much of our thinking about the child in literature:

> The romantic idea of 'child-like,' meaning innocent (however 'innocence' is constructed) and mystic, has been imposed upon actuality: to the postmodern adult reader, absorption into a text while reading is unfashionable; children (and unfashionable readers) do it—and (therefore) it is childish to do it. Any suggestion that developing readers may be just as capable of dual readings as other readers undermines childhood as constructed. (Hunt and Lenz 6)

What Hunt and Lenz identify here is a general need for simplification that is often overlaid by a well-meaning author/reader/publisher on children's books. We can make no mistake that the child who must read two levels at once is a savvy child, which may be

why these contiguous fantasies are often populated by savvy children: the very nature of these fantasies asks children to read both the fantastic and the mundane at the same time and to cope with the simultaneity of this kind of setting. I like to think of all of the protagonists in these novels as brothers and sisters of Lyra (after Pullman's memorable heroine). The female protagonists (Edie, Sadie, and Theodosia), in particular, have a "Lyra" streak in them: each is stubborn and perceptive, willful and wild. I don't think this is a coincidence either. Moving out of the pastoral/ pseudo-medieval/ pseudo-Romantic makes room for modern gender dynamics unlike those foisted upon Susan Pevensie. Breaking away from traditional settings offers the opportunity to break other traditions as well. This tendency becomes evident when we consider that Hunt and Lenz's suggestion about the need to preserve "childhood as constructed" not only recalls the lure of comforting return narratives and epilogues from earlier, but that this simplification is often made synonymous with a pastoral or agrarian setting that is the rural idyll of Victorian writers.

In the name of preservation, children are still today represented more often in pastoral spaces that flatten the experience of rural childhood into an idyllic setting, and they are strangely absent from depictions of urban spaces. Both Jenny Bavidge, a literary scholar, and Owain Jones, a geographer, have tackled the question of why this is. Since "Children's literature represents one of the most powerful manifestations of the ways in which the world is interpreted and explained to children" (Bavidge 321), Bavidge and Jones are both concerned with how children are represented in their environment (and how those representations may impact how society constructs children and places for children). Bavidge gives an idea of how little literary scholarship has been done in this

area: “children’s literary criticism has not paid enough attention to questions of spatiality (particularly urban space) and has rarely attempted to theorize the nature of place and space in children’s literature” (323). In particular, Bavidge argues, “The standard works of children’s literary criticism have not protested about or even paid much attention to the lack of representation of children’s urban environments” (323). Bavidge suggests that literature for children “promotes a nostalgic and, often, implicitly anti-urban world view” through its canonical classics which feature places such as the River Bank and Sunnybrook Farm and those fantasy settings such as Narnia and Neverland. I’d argue this is even more forceful within fantasies for children because of the generic pressures outlined above. Correspondingly, Jones’s work shows just how entrenched the divide between rural and urban is in “the symbolic notions deeply rooted in our culture” (17), and how it affects policy and thought around children on many societal levels: “‘childhood’ and the ‘urban’ are, at best, uneasy companions, and, at worst, symbolically incompatible” (17). While both Jones and Bavidge, like Hunt and Lenz, trace this preference for the rural back to a Romantic view of childhood as somehow natural and mystical, they also trace threads of how this inheritance has been reinforced time and time again, particularly within literature for children. As Bavidge suggests, “The places of these fictions have likewise become *the setting* of versions of childhood. […] Indeed their images are so abiding that they have come to operate as metonyms for childhood itself” (324).

One of the images that has become so easily recognized within representations of childhood is that of the child in the garden. Rather than roaming free across the rural landscape, the child in the garden is placed within a circumscribed space that is often the

medium for dealing with children within urban spaces. Rather than allowing the child to take part in the actual life of the city and the town, the garden places them in a bounded Edenic space figured by Susan Honeyman in "Childhood Bound: In Gardens, Maps, and Pictures" as "child-friendly" spaces in literature. She argues through a number of examples that the childhood space (fantastic and otherwise) must always be bounded in order to contain the nostalgic adult's vision of childhood: "Indulging in the escapist pleasure of constructing nostalgic worlds for fictional children, adults must carefully enclose childhood to explain its inaccessibility, yet grasp it" (117). While Honeyman's many varied examples reinforce her conclusion, she does not examine any texts that break with these traditional landscapes. In selecting the books that I have examined here, I have chosen contiguous fantasies which do not focus on child-friendly spaces such as gardens (instead, I argue these books reject the concept), and I'd take her argument further to assert that the nostalgic landscape is further imbued with notions of heritage that attempt to control and circumscribe the child protagonist in ways that reinforce a particularly conservative worldview. In Chapter 3, I argue that the built environment of London is a key part of the narrative strategy in Fletcher's *Stoneheart*, that the city itself is a refusal of this kind of easy nostalgia that easily situates the child within a pastoral space to reinforce a conservative viewpoint of how children should be represented. It's my contention throughout this study that works that reject simplified nostalgia challenge both the protagonist and the reader to see the world around them differently.

1.3: Towards a theory of landscape in children's fantasy

Only a few scholars have dealt with landscapes in children's literature. One of the

most prominent works on this topic is Carroll's *Landscape in Children's Literature* which focuses its reading on Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence in order to introduce four topoi that Carroll identifies as central to children's fantasy: the sanctuary topos, the green topos, the roadway topos, and the lapsed topos. She suggests that "topoanalyses may be adapted to provide means of understanding the influence of fictional locations upon fictional characters" (14). Within her introduction of these categories, Carroll asserts that "Landscape shapes literature both contextually and textually and the same geographical, cultural, and socio-political concerns which affect real territories also form the contextual substrata which underlie any work of fiction" (1). Taking from the Landscape History movement, Carroll likens the layers of a text's antecedents and literary histories to the physical substrata of the landscape, suggesting that "the forms and functions of those landscapes [in modern texts] are embedded in much earlier literature" (5). Reading her topoi through layers of literary history and archaeological layers of landscape, Carroll suggests an "organic and interactive relationship between narrative meaning and geographical space in literature" (13).

While I do not follow her topoi formulation, this work both agrees with and extends Carroll's exhortation that the landscape in children's literature is a worthwhile and understudied area. Carroll's book sets out a central metaphor useful for my reading of landscape in her chapter on the lapsed topos: her suggestion that Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* "and the landscape the texts are built upon, are constructed as a vast palimpsest, a text in which the correlation of space and time is realized through stratification. The metaphor of stratification is a useful one when it comes to understanding the relationship between time, place, and memory" (140). This double metaphor—that the strata of the

archaeological and geological landscape are a haptic and essential part of the palimpsest that we can read within the layers of associations (historical, mythic, etc.) within the fiction's setting—is an essential part of how I approach the landscapes in the coming chapters. As Carroll points out, "Over time, soil, like memory, is deposited in layers. The deepest layers are the oldest; the shallowest ones are the most recently laid" (141), and, in order to fully come into their own sense of self, the child protagonist must understand more than the surface layer in more ways than one.

However, while Carroll's reading focuses intensely on Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* (1965-1977), the texts that I examine are, in many ways, counterexamples. Cooper's text contains many of the hallmarks of the contiguous fantasy category laid out above: it includes a layer of fantasy within consensus reality, there are no sustained portals or Otherworlds, and the fantasy is tied into the landscapes of consensus reality in such a way that myth, soil, narrative, and rock form layers that the story digs down into. The fiction is fused with the historical and folkloric narrative of the places it occupies. The main child protagonists, the Drew children and Will Stanton, work on behalf of the Light, searching for signs, symbols, and artifacts within the landscapes of Cornwall and Wales in order to defeat the Dark Ones and ultimately restore the Arthurian lineage in the form of the Welsh boy, Bran. Cooper's series, like Alan Garner's *Weirdstone of Bringasamen* (1960) and Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), is a touchstone text among fantasies for children and among texts that place fantasy elements in consensus reality, and it features prominently in the following chapters because of this status. Unlike other prominent children's fantasies from the same period such as Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three* (1964) and Ursula K. LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*

(1968), which place their story within a pseudo-medieval Otherworld, Cooper's story is contemporary to when she began writing (the mid-1960s) and contiguous with consensus reality. However, Cooper's settings are traditional in that they are mostly pastoral, mostly invested in places where people are living traditional lives in the countryside outside the bustle of urban 20th-century living (which might look apolitical but is actually embracing a certain political turn of its own), and, in many ways, suffused with notions of restoration and heritage that repeat the cycles of earlier fantasies.

In Chapter 4, I discuss, in particular, how Cooper's *Over Sea and Under Stone* treats the museum space as a traditional space of adult authority that takes away the child protagonist's agency and seals the fantastic object, in this case the grail, away from use, essentially shutting down the fantasy. However, other critics have noted the problematic associations with heritage in the novels. The series employs early medieval British history, Arthurian legends and Welsh and Cornish folk tales and customs but keeps itself firmly planted in the real world of 1960s Britain, specifically Cornwall and Wales. As Peter Goodrich wryly points out, this series "superbly illustrates the overwhelming medieval presence" in children's and fantasy literature (165). The balance between medievalism and reality in Cooper's *Dark is Rising* series "breaks down," according to Goodritch, "because she tries to be simultaneously atavistic, or backward-looking, and developmental, or forward-looking" (Goodritch 170). Bringing together the past and the present need not constitute a breakdown; however, Cooper's reliance on heritage contributes to this feeling in the text.

Within *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the three Drew children—Jane, Simon and Barney—are drawn into the quest to find the grail cup among Cornwall's sea coasts and

standing stones by their parents' friend, the mysterious professor and archaeologist Merriman Lyon (Merlin), while the children are on vacation in the fictional village of Trewissick near St. Austell, the largest town in Cornwall. Great Uncle Merry or "Gumerry," as the Drew children affectionately call him, is the only character in all five of the books in the series. The Drew children are not part of a lineage like Will Stanton (introduced in eponymous *The Dark is Rising* volume, he is an Old One because of his status as a seventh son of a seventh son) and Bran (introduced in *The Grey King*, he is revealed to be King Arthur's son), but they are introduced into the adventure because they are, as Michael D. C. Drout points out, "'culturally English' and follow in the heritage that has been established historically by individuals like Alfred the Great and culturally through stories about heroes like Scyld and Beow and Beowulf" (Carroll 136). However, the children, just like the Pevensies, are swept into the Manichean quest without any agency to question this lineage or to push back against the overwhelming representation of history that is so present within Cooper's pastoral landscapes.

In the first few pages, *Over Sea, Under Stone* places the evil doer within "the tall graceful triangle of a yacht" and juxtaposes that vessel against the good-natured and solid naturalness of the Cornish fishing boats, immediately associating authenticity and goodness with the working people of the Cornish Coast. The fetishization of these villagers, who are stout, solid, and somehow aware of magic in the way that a city dweller could never be yet are in need of both Merlin and a gaggle of outsider children to solve the mysteries of myths within their own lands, breaks down under the series' ultimate goals of restoration and preservation. Goodritch argues that Cooper's world "insists, in the end, on breaking the magic spell and thrusting the reader irrevocably

outside the pentagram back into the mundane world" (165). However, when Cooper's "eclectic medievalism" and the real world are reintegrated at the end of the Manichean quest, "her implied critique of rational belief and of the current social and technological elite breaks down and becomes instead an explicit justification" (170). In "Thatchers and Thatcherites: Lost and Found Empire in Three British Fantasies," Daphne Kutzer offers a political rationale, arguing, "much of what Cooper appears to be arguing for bears a striking resemblance to Thatcher's economic and social policies" (202). In the face of world-destroying powers, the concern of maintaining class, age and gender boundaries seems ironically unrealistic. However, Cooper's appeal to heritage solidifies just these concerns.

Cooper's anachronistic Arthurian quest is hampered by the white, middle class, male-dominated real world where women are stout, reliable people who are usually cheerfully laboring to make a hearty meal. The traditional family unit is constantly reinforced. The children must regularly return from their forays into the fight with the Dark to be tended by mother figures. They must be soldiers for light but simultaneously children who need nurturing and caring for. Despite this vital responsibility, women's roles are surprisingly limited. Mary Harris Veeder argues that "in all five novels the binary opposition between males and females central to the patriarchal world is sustained. In both psychological and representational economies within the sequence, man and the authority of his law are central" (11). In *Under Sea, Over Stone*, there are a few tantalizing glimpses of women who do other work, such as a friend of the Drew family who is a female professor whose visit lasts all of two pages and who does not engage with the story in any meaningful way. In *Greenwitch* the women of the Cornish village

take part in a folk tradition that creates a creature of high magic; however, they too are quickly pushed aside for the power of the predominantly male Old Ones and not entrusted with the power of defending their own homes or traditions. In *The Grey King,* all of the women, save for a frightfully ashamed Guinevere who enters the real world only long enough to leave Bran behind, are utterly voiceless; most women appear to be making Welsh cakes for most of the novel. While the Arthurian kernel of the tale is obviously subject to scrutiny as part of a primarily male mythology that privileges Britain over the rest of the world, other writers have successfully used the Arthurian quest for feminist ends.[22] Cooper's reluctance to shift the Arthurian paradigm away from its hegemonic roots reinforces this reliance upon an unyielding and dogmatic vision of the myth.

These issues may come from Cooper's work relying on the restorative nostalgic vision of Britain as the center of magic. Cooper's text appears to reach into the strata of the landscape, as Carroll's readings focus upon, but, in comparison to *Stoneheart* or *The Red Pyramid*, Cooper's text appears only to only recognize two layers: the present (as it is threatened by the Dark and glossed with a somewhat idyllic rendering of rural middle class) and the mythic-cum-archaeological past. There is little recognition of the all of the layers in between. These two intersecting binaries—Past and Present and Dark and Light—leave little in between for the child protagonist to investigate, to examine critically, and to learn from. This may be why, when comparing the Arthurian myth cycle in Alexander's *Taran Wanderer* and *The High King* with Cooper's sequence,[23] Lois R.

[22] Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* books, Sharan Newman's Guinevere series, Rosalind Miles's Guinevere trilogy and Isolde trilogy and Mary Stewart's Merlin cycle are obvious examples.
[23] Kuznets chooses not to discuss the three earlier books in Alexander's series and similarly divides *The Dark is Rising* series because she identifies the later volumes as having a specifically 'Arthurian' pattern,

Kuznets argues that "Placed beside Alexander, Cooper, the Briton, seems to have retained all of the elitist trappings of the 'Arthurian myth of male development,' while Alexander, the American, [through his hero Taran] has somehow democratized it, transforming it into an exemplum of the American ideal of 'equal opportunity,' epitomized by the slogan, 'Any boy may grow up to be President'" (Kuznets 29). Kutzer agrees with Kuznets, pointing out that Cooper's great quest is for "not only the fight of Light and Dark in the world but the fate of large families … who can afford to live on the father's salary in a nice house in the country while Mum whips up the daily bangers and mash… [this series is] nostalgic for a past that no longer exists and that was far from ideal when it did exist" (Kutzer 203).[24]

These readings of Cooper recall similar problems with the split between the real world and pseudo-medieval medieval world in other fantasy children's favourites such as Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in which the Pevensie girls are not allowed to fight in the battle alongside their brothers and are cast into traditional roles as helpers and healers against their wishes. Numerous critics point to the gender inequality that has so often accompanied hero narratives in fantasy literature. "Authority is male," announces Ursula K. Le Guin, ironically: "It's a fact. My fantasy dutifully reported that fact. But is that what fantasy does—report facts?" (qtd. in Hunt 3). Kuznets points out that other fantasy novels written in the period, such as Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*, "using some of the Arthurian materials, has chosen to confront modern problems of class

but also because she argues their audience is too young for her purposes and that they are not "really appropriate for adolescents" (26). While her first reason seems reasonable, her second seems particularly arbitrary and troubling.

[24] Kutzer also points to the representation of Dark agents as lower class or obviously racially Other (205).

and sex head on in ways which none of the high fantasies have done" (26).[25] However, Cooper's work has remained strongly popular and its penultimate volume, *The Grey King* (1975), was awarded the Newbery. Like Kuznets, Kutzer is skeptical of this fanfare: "the works of both Cooper and [Lynne Reid] Banks [author of *The Indian in the Cupboard*] remain widely popular among children, who are unaware that they are soaking up a conservative ideology as they enjoy reading 'fantasies' that actually have strong roots in reality" (208).

Reading conservative ideology within Cooper's representation of British heritage and her simplification of the Light versus Dark archetype in which an essential Britishness is the epitome of goodness fits with what Valerie Krips explains in *The Presence of the Past: Memory, Heritage and Childhood in Postwar Britain* was a post-war national investment in the child figure. Krips argues that Britain's appeals to heritage in the 1960s and 70s attempted to re-calibrate the country's sense of the past as a way of coping with the horrors of World War II. She locates the nostalgic tendency to look inward for tradition and origins within the figure of the fictional child, "a character who was to be as important for the collective relation of the past to the present as it is was for the individual" (1).[26] This period saw a great many changes in the way that Britain

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[25] Garner's work also focuses heavily on landscape, drawing on precise footfall knowledge of locations in England and Wales for his settings; however, *The Owl Service* (1967), in particular, problematizes both the convention of the countryside idyll and the imperative of restoration by having three teenagers painfully re-experience the the *Math fab Mathonwy* branch of the Mabinogion, while in *The Dark is Rising*, Cooper appeals to a less precise set of stories, ranging from Bran the Blessed in the Mabinogion to Cornish folk tradition to Malory. Both authors are intensely invested in conceptions of British history as articulated through its historical and archaeological landscape, but while Cooper romanticizes a continuity with a specifically British past, Garner suggests that modern class divisions in rural Wales can be explored through contact with mythology.

[26] Krips explains that "The past to which Britain turned postwar was not that of empire and imperial conquest," (4) but rather what Patrick Wright calls "precious and imperilled [sic] traces. … [A] closely held iconography of what it is to be English— all of them appealing in one covertly projective way or another to the historic and sacrosanct identity of the nation," (qtd. in Krips 4). She argues, "These traces … were

defined itself, from the breakdown of giant, private estates to the abandoning of colonial outposts and the self-designation of Britain as an imperial power that stretched from ocean to ocean. As Boym explains, restorative nostalgia contains two paradoxes: "[f]irst, the more rapid and sweeping the pace and scale of modernization, the more conservative and unchangeable the new traditions tend to be. Second, the stronger the rhetoric of continuity with the historical past and emphasis on traditional values, the more selectively the past is presented" (42).

1.4: The Harry Potter Question: A Case Study

Each of the books that I study here has been published since the millennium (excepting *The Subtle Knife* which was published just before); a simple reason for this is that in the last decade and a half, the publishing market saw a proliferation of children's fantasy as a reaction to the *Harry Potter* phenomenon: middle grade and young adult books have claimed a much larger territory than ever before. The evidence that children's and young adult (YA) publishing has grown substantially is everywhere we look from blogs and social media to libraries and brick and mortar retailers. For example, in many bookstores, middle grade children's and YA literature used to reside in a corner of the store alongside board books for toddlers and shelves of stuffed animals, but seemingly overnight, these sections overgrew the "children's area," colonizing areas of the main store formerly reserved for adult best sellers and showing that there is increasing physical

metonymic of a world lost not only to history-books, records, and archives, but also to the day-to-day experience of individuals" (4).

and cultural space for middle grade and young adult books.[27] As YA Fantasy author Tamora Pierce suggests in a 2009 interview, the remarkable success of *Harry Potter* is directly responsible for a new era for children's and YA fantasy in particular: "Publishers discovered with Harry [Potter] that kids will read a lot of fantasy, and they'll read big books. And rather than just publishing books like Harry, they just started to publish fantasy and take chances on unusual fantasy. So we are really having a golden age" (qtd. in Anders). Critics, academics and publishing insiders have written countless articles on the impact of Rowling's success on everything from literacy rates to the increasing page counts[28] of middle grade novels.[29] These particular territories have been well-covered, so I don't wish to offer a summary here; instead, I want to suggest that Rowling's fantasy world has had a large impact on the scope and number of fantasies for middle grade readers, generally, and that it has whetted readers' and publishers' appetites for fantasies that employ real world landscapes, in particular.

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[27] Hoping to catch a piece of the Pottermania, publishers not only ushered in large numbers of new children's fantasy books in the last 15 years, but many also republished books from their catalogues that had similarities to Rowling's series. An example of repackaging for new audiences is Diana Wynne Jones's excellent *Chrestomanci* series (the first book, *Charmed Life*, was published in 1977); their new covers declared them "Hotter Than Potter!" According to Pat Pinsent, Jones's *Chrestomanci* series is "as multi-layered as Rowling's universe and her books have much to offer adults, though they have not been so popular with children as Rowling's work" (27). Jones was an undeniably successful fantasy writer, but she never attained the stratospheric success of Rowling.

[28] Briana Shemroske, an editorial assistant for *Booklist*'s youth department, found that page counts for middle grade books have soared 173% since 1976, with the biggest jump happening between 2006 and 2016. Average book lengths in this age category jumped from 174.5 in 2006 to 290 in 2016. She says she asked veterans of the middle grade publishing world for answers about the change: "I asked *Booklist*'s own Ilene Cooper, currently a contributing editor but a longtime former Books for Youth editor (as well as a picture-book, middle-grade, and YA author in her own right), and Carolyn Phelan, a veteran contract reviewer and librarian, for their thoughts. They both offered the same two words: 'Harry Potter'" (Shemroske).

[29] *The New York Times* added a children's best-sellers list in order to deal with the perpetually list-topping success of Rowling's novels. Just before the change took place on July 23, 2000, Dinita Smith wrote in the *Times* book section that the editors made the change "largely in response to the expected demand for the fourth in the Harry Potter." The famed list had featured Rowling books for 79 weeks in a row at that time, and Book Review editor Charles McGrath commented, "The time has come when we need to clear some room" on the list (Smith).

Many scholarly critics and press reviewers have argued that a part of Rowling's appeal is that her magical world is so intimately aligned with the real world that children recognize. The *Harry Potter* books offer the tantalizing possibility that magic is not sequestered in an unreachable world: Tap the right derelict London wall in the right sequence, and you too could enter Diagon Alley. In her article on the parallels between Harry Potter and Victorian school fiction, Pinsent briefly muses on why Harry Potter is so popular with younger readers (as opposed to a work of high fantasy that offers similar magical school themes like Ursula K. LeGuin's *Earthsea* series). She suggests that Harry Potter "seems to mediate the entry of the younger reader into the secondary world and also allows for occasional interaction with the primary world" (32). Rowling's series spends little time in consensus reality, though it starts in the suburbs of the imaginary Little Whinging in the very real county of Surrey, where Aunt Petunia "spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours" (Rowling, *The Philosopher's Stone* 7). Despite the pun, Little Whinging creates a familiar middle class scene that is easily relatable with its somewhat uninspiring playground, elderly neighbours, group of neighbourhood toughs (including Dudley) roaming on bikes, and street names like Wisteria Walk, Magnolia Crescent and Privet Drive. It may, in fact, be more relatable to most readers than stereotypical fantasies that promote an impoverished goatherd to head wizard or start with a wayward prince. This could be one of countless towns, but, while it is relatable, it is not locationally precise like the other fantasies I examine.[30] However, the relatability of Little Whinging and a few other "occasional

[30] Little Whinging is very familiar to the British reader, who can picture rows of postwar houses in many outer boroughs throughout the UK. It's also vague enough that it's fairly familiar to readers from the US and Canada, but I imagine that Harry Potter's "real world" locations register on different levels for Brits

interaction[s]" with specific places is enough to (at least symbolically) intimately connect it to British landscape.

The popularity of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books (and the vast increase in children's fantasy publishing in the years since) has impacted the numbers and breadth of children's novels that place fantasy in the "real world," but *Harry Potter* does not make "footfall knowledge" of the landscape a major element, and it does not challenge the nostalgic longing inherent in earlier fantasy landscapes; however, its popular idea of magic in the real world anticipated the books examined later in this project. The novels I focus on are often compared to the *Harry Potter* series, but each one differs in the specificity of its landscapes. In Harry Potter, we teeter between the relatable (but not necessarily locatable) and fully magical. The Burrow and Godric's Hollow locations are purposefully unclear and Hogwarts is built purely out of fantasy much like a magical version of Schloss Neuschwanstein. The bedrock of Rowling's settings is high fantasy, evoking a romanticized nostalgia for a past Britain of green town squares, thatched cottages, village pubs—possibly a Hobbit or two—and the mystery and majesty of castles and forts.[31] Even in London, other than the specific King's Cross Station and the vague location of somewhere on Tottenham Court Road, Rowling's locations are diffuse. However, for readers, both the consensus reality and magical locations seem comfortingly familiar. There are enough hints at consensus reality to orient the reader in this world, and, in the magical Otherworld, the *Harry Potter* novels can draw upon unnamed history in the soil of Britain that fantasy readers will intuitively understand.

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who are used to ruined castles and train travel compared to North Americans who may ascribe strangeness to some place as mundane as King's Cross.

[31] The Hog's Head could be pictured under *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*'s entry for "Pubs."

Details like Dumbledore's "Order of Merlin First Class" automatically infer that these are the same lands of the Matter of Britain and all of the many-layered retellings that have occurred since. Although most castles in Britain do not have moving stairways and talking portraits, literary and popular culture images of a castles give us enough signposts to imagine the magical world. However, Rowling steers clear of specific historical places.

The reader never learns where Hogwarts is situated; it is not affiliated with any Roman ruins or medieval castles that readers can plot on a map, historical or otherwise (fans generally placed Hogwarts in Scotland because of the length of the train ride—several hours—from King's Cross Station, one of the few real places in the early books, and Rowling later confirmed on her web site, Pottermore).[32] Unlike the tangible landmarks of Charlie Fletcher's London in the *Stoneheart* trilogy, Rick Riordan's America in *The Kane Chronicles* and *Percy Jackson* books, and Philip Pullman's Oxford in *The Subtle Knife*, most of the locations in Harry Potter, as Andelys Wood points out, are associated with the films rather than the geographically locatable ground of London, Scotland and Wales. While many early critics confronted the fairly formulaic theme of a journey to a magical place in the first three books, they wrestled with whether the fantasy places in Harry Potter are in an Otherworld or not, and inspired later critics to comment on the way Harry Potter's "real" and imaginary worlds interact. Kate Behr refers to the wizarding world as the "shadow world, an underground, almost a conspiracy, given that some Muggles are aware of it, which exists in the gaps of the 'real'" (Behr 122), while

[32] Rowling uses her website, Pottermore, her Twitter account, and interviews to give more details about the series' magical world. Pottermore contains a large number of short writings that give answers to unanswered questions in the books and further information about characters, locations, spells, and creatures. In her short essay, "The Hogwarts Express," she explains that the train was created in 1692 after the imposition of the International Statute of Secrecy as a "more discreet method of transporting hundreds of wizarding children from all over Britain to their secret school in the Highlands of Scotland" (Rowling).

Sarah Cantrell suggests, "Hogwarts functions as a heterotopia, a space at once other and separate but also intimately connected to the world beyond its walls" (Cantrell 195). While this "other" space has intimate connections to the real world, Hogwarts, Hogsmeade and Godric's Hollow are only marginally related to the actual landscapes of Britain, relying on its readers' knowledge of fantastic antecedents to fill in the spatial gaps.

Although many of the landscapes of Harry Potter are not interconnected with locatable places, the movement through setting is comfortingly familiar. Hogwarts is "such a strange and splendid place" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 77), students must complete several ritualized border crossings to enter. Once they arrive at Hogwarts (metonymic throughout much of the series for the larger wizarding world), the candlelight and rituals of boarding school offer an anachronistic Edwardian world augmented by gestures at the pseudo-medieval like an enchanted wood and encounters with dragons and talking suits of armor; this prompted early reviewer A.O. Scott to declare:"[t]his is not the England of Tony Blair or Princess Di or Martin Amis, but the England we remember from other children's books, an England somehow perpetually Edwardian, notwithstanding certain concessions to modernity like telephones and coeducation" (qtd in Westman 305).[33] Hogwarts students move away from modern reality with each stage of their journey in ways that are intimately familiar to the fantasy reader. First, students must cross a boundary by steeling themselves to charge through what

[33] Karin Westman quotes Scott, suggesting his take implies "the series' appeal for child and adult readers alike resides in an ahistorical ultimately conservative rendering of British childhood experience" (305). However, Westman says Scott had missed "Rowling's adept alchemy of the more traditional boarding school and fantasy adventure narratives. Indeed, we must look beyond the gates of Hogwarts and its quill pens and candlelight to the wizarding community that it created and whose political intrigues impinge upon it" (306). Westman provides a list of reviewers whose readings of the early novels correlate with Scott's view of the novels.

appears to be a solid barrier at Platform 9 ¾, all the while ensuring that they are not seen by Muggles, reinforcing what Roni Natov calls "the central location of these stories between the earth-bound and magical worlds" (Natov 318). Then, the students take a gleaming Victorian steam train—the Hogwarts Express—to the castle grounds, evoking the traditional transportation of Victorian and Edwardian protagonists from Tom Brown to C. S. Lewis' Pevensie children.[34] Next, first year students cross a storm-tossed lake to enter Hogwarts, a romance trope of crossing water to enter magical territory. Once there, they are magically sorted into houses, a spin on a private school tradition that injects the magic of a talking hat into a seemingly administrative task. Each of these boundaries that a new student (and reader) encounters marks a crossing over taking them further and further into a carefully bounded Otherworld.

The novels go to great lengths to show how the various spaces in the wizarding world are hidden, suggesting that they could actually exist:

> "So go on - how d'you hide a place like Hogwarts?"
>
> "It's bewitched," said Hermione. "If a Muggle looks at it, all they see is a moldering old ruin with a sign over the entrance saying DANGER, DO NOT ENTER, UNSAFE."
>
> "So Durmstrang'll just look like a ruin to an outsider too?"

[34] Quest and hero narratives within fantasy often start with travel and children's literature is no exception. Trains are a literary trope across the children's literature genre: *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* starts with the Pevensie children taking a train to the country from London to avoid the first world war; Alice takes an extraordinary train journey in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*; *Anne of Green Gables* makes her way to Matthew and Marilla after a train journey from Halifax. Trains feature throughout the school story genre to transport children from their domestic world to the separate world of the school; for example, Angela Brazil's European school books, Elinor M. Brent-Dyer's early Chalet School series and Kim's train journey in Rudyard Kipling's famous story.

> "Maybe," said Hermione, shrugging, "or it might have Muggle-repelling charms on it, like the World Cup stadium. And to keep foreign wizards from finding it, they'll have made it Unplottable -"
>
> "Come again?"
>
> "Well, you can enchant a building so it's impossible to plot on a map, can't you?" (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 92)

What child reader wouldn't see a ruined castle like Tintagel and imagine that an Unplottable Enchantment could leave magic hovering out of sight? Some places are "unplottable" and reinforced with anti-Muggle charms, like the stadium for the Quidditch World Cup; others, like Hogwarts and the house where Harry was born in Godric's Hollow, are hidden using illusions; and, others, like Harry's house before his parents' deaths and 12 Grimmauld Place, are hidden using the more complicated and harder to break Fidelus Charm. This obsession with the hidden and what is hovering just out of sight (or in plain sight if you happen to have been unfortunate enough to have a wizard erase your memory) is enticing, but it also constraining. With all these ways to hide wizarding spaces, magic circumscribes the world to the point of outright resistance to consensus reality: "All those substitutes for magic Muggles use - electricity, computers, and radar, and all those things—they all go haywire around Hogwarts, there's too much magic in the air" (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 303). In *Harry Potter*, magic is sequestered to the point of refusing modernity, but there are enough touchstones to make it seem as though magical places are not far away.

Arguably, the series' fantasy marginally relies on the interconnectedness of London and Diagon Alley, Little Whinging and Hogwarts, consensus reality and the

wizarding world, but the actual historical landscape of Britain is absent. Rather, Rowling relies on bricolage to create her world: The seven Harry Potter novels mix the hero quest, supernatural or otherworldly forces and world-threatening stakes with other generic influences such as the 19th-century school story. While David Steege shows many similarities between *Harry Potter* and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and "contends that the fantasy series transforms 'the genre so significantly that the books have been able to cross borders with unprecedented success,'" (qtd. in Galway 67), Elizabeth Galway argues, "however, that Rowling does not transform the school story to the extent that Steege claims, and that the many similarities between her novels and *Tom Brown's Schooldays* demonstrate just how little has in fact changed" (Galway 67). She says, "[t]aken as a whole, the series suggests that Rowling is writing firmly within the school story tradition, rather than resisting or critiquing it. Her work does not escape the inherent elitism of the genre, which is in fact fundamental to its appeal" (77).[35] Other critics comment on the ways Rowling makes use of the national or Arthurian epic (as explored by Petrina Alessandra[36] and Ulrike Kohler[37]) and the Bildungsroman. Taking these

[35] In "The Education of a Wizard: Harry Potter and His Predecessors" Pat Pinsent examines similarities between Harry Potter and other magic boarding school stories, ultimately arguing that Rowling's use of the boarding school story is infused with "additional levels of meaning" over Jill Murphy's *Worst Witch* series and Anthony Horowitz's *Groosham Grange* series.

[36] Alessandra Petrina explores the Arthurian landscapes of the books in 2006 arguing that Rowling employs Arthurian archetypes as "useful tags for character; but the writer also uses them as references for a more complex reading, that might take into account the Bildungsroman aspect of the novels, their intricate narrative structure, the ironic interplay with traditional motifs" (109). It is worth noting here that, while Petrina shows similarities between Hogwarts and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1958)—she draws parallels between Wart and Harry and Merlin and Dumbledore—she might have seen a more interesting connections in the final Harry Potter novel*, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, published a year after her article. The "Magic is Might" slogan employed by the fascistic Ministry of Magic echoes Wart and Merlin's "Might is Right/ Right is Might" lessons about rule in White's WWII allegory.

[37] Kohler deals with the "pre-industrial settings" of the novels arguing that references to the Norman yoke and Robin Hood stories help to show the English nation as "the world's savior." She goes on to argue that "In doing so, one could speculate that it alleviates the real historical shock of its having been unable to defend itself against Nazi Germany without the support of other Allied forces" (28). Aida Street and Kori Patient make similar claims for Grindelwald as alternative Nazi symbolism in the books.

generic choices into account, many critics trace how Rowling links together modern issues with the fantasy's social and political worlds. However, this separateness means that the child protagonist is wildly unprepared for the actual world. Is there university for Hogwarts graduates? If Ron doesn't know how to properly use a telephone, how would he deal with everyday tasks? Does everyone work for the Ministry of Magic? If the reader peers too closely at the gaps in these interconnected worlds, Rowling's magic begins to break down.

Rowling's books are not fully-fledged contiguous fantasies because the fantasy spaces are separated from consensus reality, and they do not offer a break from traditional uses of the fantasy spaces. While the protagonists in the Harry Potter novels do fight against a restoration agenda based on blood heritage, the cozy domestic Edwardian world of Hogwarts is sacrosanct. On the other hand, numerous contemporary contiguous fantasies offer criticism of nostalgic landscapes. Riordan places his characters on New York City streets, within the actual collections of encyclopedic museums like the Met, and at identifiable public landmarks weaving together Ancient Egyptian culture with American signifiers to build a layered mythological landscape within American spaces. Riordan's characters, generally, fight to maintain equilibrium between humanity and the gods, most often fighting to stop ancient forces that wish to return the world to a primordial past.[38] Unlike Harry's passing through London at various points, Fletcher's characters interact with the streets of London and its many histories in tangible ways, reading the many layers of London's representation through its many statue characters

[38] While this is true in *The Kane Chronicles*, the most obvious example of this is in Riordan's follow-up to *Percy Jackson*, *The Heroes of Olympus* series (2010-2014) in which Gaia threatens to arise and utterly destroy human civilization.

and fighting against forces that wish to freeze humanity and ultimately return the world to a primordial void. Other books not discussed in as much detail in this dissertation contain similar critiques: In *The Tapestry* series by Henry Neff, Max McDaniels, another boy hero who is brought from consensus reality to a school for magic, he fights to stop the demon Astaroth from remaking the world into a time before technology, a commentary on the impulse to return to a pseudo-medieval world. The twins in Michael Scott's *The Immortal Nicholas Flamel* series fight to stop the Dark Elders from reforming human civilization based on a time when gods and monsters ruled and humans were slaves. And, as I discuss in Chapter Four, in *His Dark Materials,* Lyra and Will fight against Mrs. Coulter and the Magisterium's mission to eliminate dust and "return" the world to a state of prelapsarian innocence. Each of these series upends the expectations of the genre in that they use young protagonists (who have traditionally been uncritically associated with the primitive) to fight against atavistic forces and to restore civilization (a concept that Rousseau placed in opposition to the child). In each of these series, the young heroes fight for modernity writ large, while Rowling performs a restoration agenda of her own with her insistence that witches and wizards are separate, essentially heteronormative and quaintly ensconced in a world reminiscent of turn-of-the-century England. Rowling's books fail to break out of the traditional domestic fantasy and interact with the world in a way that is critical of past tradition. Since this project's readings of these texts depend heavily upon landscape, space, and place, I'll conclude this introduction with some definitions of these slippery concepts.

1.5: Landscape, Space, and Place

Throughout this study, I imagine *space* and *place* as broadly defined by cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. The core of his oft-cited definition is the experience of these two categories; quite simply, "In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. 'Space' is more abstract than 'place.' What begins as an undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). Spaces, then, are less defined (often—though not necessarily—without specific names that peg the location down to a particular place); in particular, space can denote both alien vastness and constricted containment for the child protagonist (for example, the "child friendly" and constricting spaces of gardens); once they are conquered or known (or sometimes named), these spaces can become places. The space of Hyde Park Corner, which at first seems like an alien blur of traffic for George, becomes the place of Royal Artillery Memorial, where his closest ally, the Gunner, has his plinth. However, the knowable place of the British Museum becomes a cold and dreary space for the child protagonists of *Over Sea, Under Stone* when we see that they are alienated by adult authority; in other words, the place becomes space because the context of adult authority makes the museum unknowable for the child protagonist. Tuan explains how these categories interact and depend on each other:

> Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The ideas of 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

While place is more secure and stable than space (which can change more radically depending on perspective or construction), it does not necessarily follow that it is safe for the child protagonist; rather, it may be more secure phenomenologically (for the moment), but it is not necessarily harmless for a child protagonist, particularly if that place is an adult space. As I argue above (and expand upon in Chapter 3), expectations surrounding the figure of the child can impact the way that space and place are represented, and this is further impacted by the representation of landscape.

Carroll's *Landscape in Children's Literature* focuses on topoi to investigate how landscape works in children's literature broadly and *The Dark is Rising* specifically. She draws from cultural geography to suggest that "Landscapes are at once geographic and historical, natural and cultural, experienced and represented, and present a spatial interface between human culture and physical terrain" (2). She defines landscape as "a construct: a portion of land or territory that is shaped and given order either physically (through cultivation or building) or imaginatively (through art or literature). The interaction between human geography and human culture transforms land into landscape" (2). In what I see as a somewhat parallel reading, Boym investigates the term *topos*, evocatively suggesting that it "refers to both a place in discourse and a place in the world. The idea of topography—in both senses of the world—is connected to the ancient Greek art of memory" (77). She recounts the legend of poet Simonides of Ceos whose life was saved when a messenger sent by Castor and Pollux called him away from a banquet at just the moment that the roof fell in, killing all his guests. She explains that Simonides used his memory of where everyone was sitting to identify the dead, creating the famous rhetorical technique of connecting memory (or things to be remembered) within an

imaginary house. From this story of "recollection and loss," Boym argues that "Places are *contexts* for remembrances and debates about the future, not *symbols* of memory or nostalgia" (77). Of course, Boym is not referring only to literary landscapes when she applies this reading to post-Communist cities in her book; however, her point is useful here because, in order to escape mimetic representation of nostalgia, the critic of the literary landscape must accept the landscape as context and not only symbol. In the context of reading of nostalgia, we must keep in mind, more specifically, that "while landscape representation is an important aspect of nationalism, it is not so hegemonic as to preclude alternative readings or other forms of resistance. Instead, landscape representations are sites of contestation, just as are the landscapes they meant to depict" (Mitchell qtd. in Watkins 68), something that this study aims to do with its investigation into how nostalgia is figured in the landscapes of children's fantasy literature. Like Boym, Carroll recognizes landscape as context with her adherence to cultural geography. While this study does not follow her approach of topoanalysis, I take her work on landscape as an invitation to conceive of and approach these books through their landscapes; specifically, she draws upon Tony Watkins' "Space, History and Culture: The Setting of Children's Literature," which exhorts critics to consider cultural geography "which explores ideas of landscape, spatiality, utopia, globalisation, heritage and national identity, and geographies of gender and race [… and] could prove vital for the cultural study of children's literature" (qtd. in Carroll 2; Watkins 67).

Chapter 2

Pyramids in America: Rewriting the "Egypt of the West" in Rick Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles* series

All the school kids so sick of books
They like the punk and the metal band
When the buzzer rings (Oh-Way-Oh)
They're walking like an Egyptian
—The Bangles, "Walk Like An Egyptian"

After she moved to the United States in 1963, Susan Cooper, author of the beloved *The Dark is Rising* sequence (1965-1977), often professed homesickness for the British landscapes of her youth. She suggested that British children, in particular, absorb the past through the very land beneath their feet:

> [I]f you are born and brought up in this long-occupied land, you acquire by a kind of osmosis a sense of the continuum of place and time…. It's a sort of fluid awareness; a freedom from the shrieking demands of Now, the present moment…. [N]o child is wholly wrapped up in the present who has grown up seeing a Norman castle from his or her bedroom window, or walking over the slope of a Neolithic hill fort on the way to school […]. (qtd. in Butler 56)

Cooper spent her youth in settings steeped in the Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon history that would later inform her fiction; she grew up in Buckinghamshire, spent time at her grandmother's house in Aberdovey, Wales, and attended university in Oxford before moving to New England where she cast back to Britain's landscapes and myths for inspiration. Both Cooper's fiction and non-fiction imbue the places of her childhood with an enduring nostalgic power that pulls her readers into a storied, layered past: "I've always been obsessed […] if there were such a thing as Old Magic, these are the places—

Wales, Cornwall—where it would be" (qtd. in Carroll 8). Charles Butler and Jane Suzanne Carroll both point to Cooper's connection with the Landscape History Movement of post-war Britain, which focused on "tramping around, that is to say, acquiring footfall knowledge of the landscape" (Carroll 9).[1] Cooper's "continuum of place and time" steeped in "Old Magic" immediately conjures the nostalgic British fantasies for children that have so permeated contemporary North American and European literary consciousness: fantasy settings have long been synonymous with the landscapes of pseudo-medieval and pseudo-Celtic Britain. [2]

In *Landscapes in Children's Literature,* Carroll constructs a compelling metaphor for the relationship between narrative, time and space: "just as time is not a single moment but a synchronic mesh of instances, the landscape is not a two-dimensional unit, but rather a kind of thick palimpsest where time and space are directly correlated" (141). In fiction like Cooper's, Britain itself becomes chronological and geographical strata that stories dig down into as they uncover narrative and topographical evidence of a long-buried Celtic or Arthurian or Roman history.[3] As Cooper demonstrates with her intimate and "strong sense of the mythic history of the land" (qtd. in Carroll 5), the pervasive

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[1] Several critics have commented on Cooper's employment of landscape in the sequence. Notably, Carroll and Butler tie Cooper's use of landscape and her interests in archaeology and the Landscape History Movement to her reading at a young age of Jacquetta Hawkes' *A Land* (1951). Hawkes' work brings together geology and archaeology "for purposes altogether unscientific" (xix). Within her poetic and intimate exploration of her native land, she explains, "The image I have sought to evoke is of an entity, the land of Britain, in which past and present, nature, man and art appear all in one piece" (xix).

[2] Butler's *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* discusses how "[a]rchaeology, geology, paleontology, and landscape history have fed the work of these writers by providing both material for their stories and models for the understanding of time, memory, and history" (44). He gives an overview of Cooper's interest in and obligation to archaeology (notably 47-50, 55-57).

[3] Cooper's best known work conjured magic in the aeries of Wales and cliffs of Cornwall to rewrite the ultimate in British narratives: Arthurian mythology. *The Dark is Rising* is composed of *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), *The Dark is Rising* (1973), *Greenwitch (*1974), *The Grey King* (1975), and *Silver on the Tree* (1977).

strategy that ties fantasy to the historical and mythic landscapes of Britain is rooted in both a nostalgic longing for and a haptic relationship with the deep archeological strata of the British landscape where time and place are inextricably entwined and the ancient substrata of the land are embedded with myth. While Cooper's writing shows that the relationship between a place and its stories is rooted within a deep nostalgia for Britain as the bedrock of fantasy, Rick Riordan takes a different approach in *The Kane Chronicles* series (2010-2012),[4] where the fantasy is instead contiguous with present day America.

Riordan mimics British fantasy's deep palimpsest of history and place but anachronistically imbues modern American landscapes, like the Washington Monument, with the power that other western fantasies reserve for older historical sites like the mystic ring of Cornish standing stones in Cooper's *Over Sea, Under Stone*. *The Kane Chronicles* includes *The Red Pyramid* (2010), *The Throne of Fire* (2011) and *The Serpent's Shadow* (2012).[5] The series follows siblings Sadie and Carter Kane on their quest to deal with troublesome Ancient Egyptian gods who have come to inhabit the real world. In the first book of the series, *The Red Pyramid*, the teen protagonists discover that they have inherited magic from the Ancient Egyptian pharaohs[6] through both their

[4] After the conclusion of the series, Riordan published three crossover short stories featuring the Kane siblings and characters from his *Percy Jackson and The Olympians* series (2005-2009) and has hinted at a crossover novel in the future. So far, the stories are "The Son of Sobek" (2013), "The Staff of Serapis" (2014), and "The Crown of Ptolemy" (2015).

[5] With a few exceptions, I will focus here on the first novel, *The Red Pyramid*, as its main quest is set in America (while *The Throne of Fire* and *The Serpent of Chaos* spend more of their crucial climactic scenes in Egypt and elsewhere), and my focus here is on Riordan's anachronistic use of modern American landscapes and structures. While there are tantalizing American settings in *The Throne of Fire* and *The Serpent's Shadow* that serve as examples of Riordan's strategy (particularly the setting of Las Vegas' Luxor Casino), *The Red Pyramid* offers a quest that tracks a clear trajectory across the American continent and, thus, its narrative offers the most cohesive vision of the series' overall relationship to the American landscape.

[6] Elaborate genealogies structure many Fantasies for children including Riordan's four series (his first children's book starts with Percy discovering that he is not a normal teenager, but, in fact, the son of Poseidon), but Riordan's genealogy in *The Kane Chronicles* is a bit more complicated than the direct genealogy between Percy and the Greek gods. Carter and Sadie are not descended from the gods but from

African American father and their deceased white British mother.[7] Their discovery leads them across the United States of America as they hunt the devious red god Set and fulfill fantastic quests tied to American landmarks that have Ancient Egyptian ties. While Cooper's standing stones and Welsh hillsides carry instant associations with her Arthurian and Celtic antecedents, Riordan's associations of Ancient Egypt with modern America are less immediately apparent. Some landmarks have more obvious links to Ancient Egypt than others: for example, the Washington Monument is the "biggest obelisk ever constructed," and is therefore, as Carter and Sadie learn, "the largest single source of Egyptian power in North America" (*The Red Pyramid* 239).[8] The monument is an effective illustration of anachronistic monuments in the style of Ancient Egypt and a potent symbol of America's larger-than-life self-image. Other landmarks have a less obvious relationship with Ancient Egypt: at one point in the story, Thoth, the god of knowledge, tasks Sadie and Carter with retrieving a powerful object from "a magician's tomb" (*The Red Pyramid* 296) that is guarded by two enemy magicians. After blowing up a pair of blue suede shoes and stopping mid-battle to ogle at the garishness of

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pharaohs who wielded great magical power in concert with the gods through a kind of magical merging. At the beginning of the series, their father casts a spell that results in his becoming at one with Osiris, god of the dead; he is lost to the mortal world but—merged with Osiris—takes over the throne of judgment in the Underworld. They also discover that their mother's death was not accidental, as they had been told. She was killed using dangerous magic to open a portal in order to set free the cat goddess Bast.

[7] The importance of race in these books is tied inextricably to both the American and Ancient Egyptian landscapes. In *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania*, Scott Trafton traces the often-conflicting ways Ancient Egypt was interpreted by 19th-century America. On the surface, there is the obvious parallelism between America and Ancient Egypt as great empires that had slavery at the very core of their societies, but Trafton's work explores the many conflicting ways that Ancient Egypt was embraced as a potent symbol in 19th-century African American culture. He refers to this fraught relationship between African Americans and Ancient Egyptian signifiers as "a doubled doubleness in American national and racial identity in which a doubled relationship is evident between nineteenth-century America and ancient Egypt and brought into view by the doubled relationship African Americans had with America" (3).

[8] The Washington Monument was constructed between 1848-1885 and stands 169.046 m tall. For Ancient Egyptians, obelisks were decorative and ritualistic structures often built in pairs at the entrances of temples; they represent a solid beam of sunlight that symbolizes the sun god Ra.

Graceland's Jungle Room— "[d]espite the danger we were in, the place was so horrid, I just had to stop and marvel" (299)—the siblings end up at Elvis's grave where they retrieve a "necklace with a silver loop-topped cross" (308) that Thoth declares is "Powerful magic!" (313).[9] Like the Washington Monument's obelisk, the ankh (the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyph meaning "life") has made its way from Ancient Egypt into mainstream American culture where numerous countercultural movements and figures, including Elvis, have appropriated it as a mystical and/or progressive symbol. In this series, Riordan does little to acknowledge the depth of archaeological time in the United States or the Americas more generally. The ancient Egyptian gods see America as a new, clean slate as opposed to finding themselves in contest with indigenous mythology. Instead, his strategy focuses on America's tangled history of appropriating Egyptian symbols and structures. Whether using larger than life physical structures (like the Washington Monument) or symbolic elements tied to unexpected spaces (like Elvis's ankh at Graceland), Riordan's strategy makes the connections between America and Ancient Egypt palpable for his readers.[10] With a good dose of humour (and often irony), he seizes previously appropriated symbols and structures and reclaims them as "authentically" Ancient Egyptian while simultaneously recognizing their entrenchment in mainstream American culture.

[9] In the 1972 documentary film *Elvis on Tour*, Elvis is seen wearing a famous blue and gold ankh necklace. Fan sites note that Elvis wore a number of different ankh necklaces during the 1970s; originals and copies of some of these necklaces are for sale in a variety of online stores dedicated to Elvis memorabilia. Elvis' former girlfriend Linda Thompson explained in a 2006 interview with Larry King that Elvis "used to wear an Egyptian ankh, a star of David, and a crucifix around his neck. And when people would say 'Are you confused?' he would say, 'No, not at all. I just don't want to miss heaven on a technicality'" ("Interview with Linda Thompson").

[10] The god of knowledge, Thoth, tells Carter that music is a particularly strong type of magic, again connecting Elvis to the books' magical themes. Carter explains to his sister that Elvis borrowed music from African American history. In this context, the connection of music to race is a subtle reference to a possible Ancient Egyptian lineage for Elvis' magic.

Riordan's attention to unexpected strata of the American landscape and his investment in the contiguity of the fantasy differ from many of the most famous American Fantasies for children. Anticipating Carroll's palimpsest metaphor, Peter Hunt explains, "Because there is little to dig down into, American fantasy tends to be set in secondary worlds" ("Landscapes and Journeys" 11). The British have a greater number of contiguous fantasies—fantasies set in consensus reality—because, Hunt suggests, there is simply more fodder for fantasy embedded in the geographical strata of its landscape, whereas Americans like Ursula K. Le Guin and Lloyd Alexander remove their stories to a high fantasy world in order to assemble the same kind of depth. Compared to these American Otherworlds, Hunt and Millicent Lenz suggest, "[t]he English … are retreading ancestral ground. Their reference points are more concrete, deep-rooted cultural symbols which seem to lie, sometimes literally, underfoot" (Hunt and Lenz 11). As my interest is the use of consensus reality's landscapes, I examine *The Kane Chronicles* precisely because it is a contiguous fantasy and not set in an Otherworld, but also because it is an American contiguous fantasy set in New York, Nashville, Memphis and other American landscapes. Riordan's novels distinguish themselves because they place these modern American landscapes on par with Hunt and Lenz's "concrete, deep-rooted cultural symbols" in Britain and question whether age matters in the children's fantasy genre that depends so much upon nostalgia for the past.

If landscape is a palimpsest of time and space, American fantasies must wrestle with a different relationship to landscape than British fantasies simply due to American topography, human history, and the cultural expectations of the genre. From the non-indigenous perspectives that this (and many) children's fantasy novels adopt, the vast

landscape of the U.S.A. does not have the depth of inhabited time—it is geologically the same age, but, in terms of human habitation, it lacks density and duration—of landscapes in Britain, so novels like Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles* must make use of a much larger area. Within British fantasies, less geographical space means the landscape is characterized instead by its *depth*: in Britain a multitude of historical layers are available within in a small area; in American fantasy, by contrast, the impetus is to stretch outwards to achieve the same measure of meaning through *breadth*. Rather than a dense page—or pile of pages—written over with many layers of meaning, the palimpsest of the American landscape in these narratives has less depth but more breadth; this is especially true in the case of a text like Riordan's that brings together something as seemingly improbable as recognizable Ancient Egyptian forms scattered across the country.

The sparse number of recognizable Ancient Egyptian symbols and structures dotting the American landscape means that Riordan cannot merely dig down into the stratified history of one city or state in order to come up with enough layers for his story to work.[11] Instead, Riordan moves laterally across the landscape in his quest to bring Ancient Egypt to the real world of modern America. Riordan's story encompasses places as far apart as New York, Las Vegas, and Graceland to accumulate the same measure of meaning that British writers can find in one town or county. Critics have discussed the

[11] In *Stoneheart*, for example, author Charlie Fletcher brings the statues of the city to life, allowing him to choose his characters from two millennia of London's history (his characters range from Boadicea to Samuel Johnson to the post-modern statue Divided Self). The luxury of this rich—almost encyclopedic—array of statues gives Fletcher choice between the many strata of a city that boasts a long and dense history of human habitation (archaeologists have recently dated a Mesolithic structure found in Vauxhall to 4500 BCE; some experts suggest that modern humans reached Britain at least 43,000 years ago compared to 12,000 to 13,000 years ago in America). London's palimpsest is such a riot of layers that Fletcher's choices among the many potential statue characters—and layers of the landscape— represent his strategy of history and landscape, whereas Riordan needs to stretch across the breadth of the American landscape to accumulate layers of meaning.

differences between the development of fantasies in Britain and the U.S.A., many agreeing this vast landscape plays a key role in how American children's fantasy has progressed in the last two centuries. In "Landscapes and Journeys, Metaphors and Maps: The Distinctive Feature of English Fantasy," for example, Hunt compares the British layered conception of history—the strata that fantasy narratives can dig down into—to the approach taken in American fantasy, which he says is "one reaching outwards and westwards; it is a linear matter" (Hunt 11) much like Riordan's lateral palimpsest.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that Rick Riordan's approach to landscape in *The Kane Chronicles* manipulates the nostalgia of traditional British fantasy (and the early American fantasies inspired by it) in a setting devoid of Cooper's beloved Norman castles and Neolithic hill forts of the British landscape. It takes the relationship with landscape that is typical of British fantasy—the recognition that landscape is written with layers of meaning— and reimagines it to fit a modern American context. *The Red Pyramid* acutely (and *The Kane Chronicles,* more broadly) achieves this goal by conjoining modern America with Ancient Egyptian mythology; I argue that this strategy reveals unexpected layers of the American landscape. Riordan's text in some ways fits into and in others rethinks the nostalgic aspects of its lineage from both American fantasies for children and their British counterparts that are the wellspring of modern children's literature. To demonstrate this deployment of landscape that rejects the typical nostalgia of fantasy landscapes, I compare Riordan's use of mythology to that of an early American forerunner, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*, to show how Riordan's approach circumvents the bounded nature of many previous fantasies for children.

Instead, I posit that Riordan's strategy of Americanizing Ancient Egypt disrupts traditional connections between nostalgic landscapes, history, and mythology by claiming a space for America within ancient mythologies. By mobilizing a vast amount of space to bring ancient Egyptian gods into an American setting, *The Kane Chronicles* epitomizes the American challenge to be included in the ideological construct of Western civilization and its project of history and myth. *The Kane Chronicles*, I argue, uses anachronism to reclaim and reinvent modern Ancient Egyptian cultural symbols within the American landscape, and by doing so, Riordan stakes America's claim both for inclusion in this conception of Old World mythology and for rewriting that mythology. *The Kane Chronicles* use anachronism to fit America into Classical mythology and to manipulate the fantasy genre's traditional treatment of landscape and the nostalgia that so often attaches to it. The traditional privilege given to British landscapes as the arbiters of "place and historical presence" (Hunt 11) makes Riordan's strategy even more interesting, often problematic, and, occasionally radical. Riordan manipulates "place and historical presence" to push against the traditional boundaries of fantasy landscapes.

Riordan's use of modern American landmarks, in particular, displaces age as somehow inherently powerful, thus rejecting the nostalgic yearning for the ancient that is so prevalent in fantasies for children. Overall, while this series certainly stretches "outwards and westwards" (Hunt, "Landscapes and Journeys" 11), these texts are also interested in *rewriting,* and to a large extent *Americanizing*, the traditional uses of landscape in children's literature. By examining Riordan's use of prominent American landmarks to cause this disruption, I contend that Riordan's anachronisms do not merely dig up ancient signifiers and place them on a broad "New World" palimpsest devoid of

its own metaphorical layers of association. This long-established American strategy of co-opting the symbols of ancient cultures to assert its own identity, while rejecting a certain kind of nostalgia, is fraught with problems that taint the signifiers it attempts to co-opt and renew. Riordan asserts the wholeness of the American landscape as palimpsest by bringing to the fore America's rich tradition of appropriating and reconstituting the symbols and stories of ancient cultures to explore modern anxieties.

2.1: Blowing up the Rosetta Stone: De-centering the European Landscape

In *The Red Pyramid*, Carter and Sadie travel across the American landscape in a series of visits to carefully chosen American destinations that have associations with Ancient Egypt, but they start their quest at the British Museum, where the explosive destruction of the renowned Rosetta Stone introduces the series' connection between America and Ancient Egypt. Carter and his father, archaeologist and secret magician Julius Kane, visit London where Sadie, although an American citizen, lives with her English grandparents (Sadie and Carter, who travelled with his Egyptologist father to archaeological digs and museums across the world, later discover that they were purposefully kept separate after their mother's death because being in proximity sparked their individual magic potential). During their reunion outing, Julius takes his children on what appears to be a boring work trip to the British Museum to see the Rosetta Stone. He tells his children that the famous stone (which French Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion discovered was the key to interpreting hieroglyphics) was, "[w]hen it was first carved, no big deal" (*The Red Pyramid* 20).[12] However, "over the centuries it has

[12] Champollion (1790-1832) built upon the efforts of Thomas Young to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs. In 1822, he published his translation of the Rosetta Stone, forever altering the study of Ancient Egypt. *The*

become a powerful symbol. Perhaps the most important connection between Ancient Egypt and the modern world. I was a fool not to realize its potential sooner" (20).[13] Here, Riordan sets up his idea that an object does not inherently contain power because of its age; instead, the accumulation of meaning—Carroll's "synchronic mesh of instances" (141)—gives power to an artifact. The power of the Rosetta Stone is not innate: when it was created, it was "[n]othing important. It's basically a thank-you letter from some priests to King Ptolemy V" (*The Red Pyramid* 20). However, its power as the metaphorical key to the past, its pride of place at the British Museum, its symbolic representation of colonial exploits in Egypt, and its place at the centre of the debate about repatriation make it powerful—and an appropriate conduit for Julius' magic. When Julius performs a spell that blows up the Rosetta Stone and unleashes five major gods of the Ancient Egyptian pantheon, he is immediately overtaken by Osiris. At first, the red god of chaos, Set, is the only other god who appears, trapping Julius (who is now fused with Osiris) in a sarcophagus that sinks through the floor and disappears. In a meta-textual moment that sets up the series, Set declares, "Now let the story be told anew. And this time you shall never rise!" (26). In Ancient Egyptian myths (there are several variations), Osiris was the first god-king of Egypt and had four godly siblings (Set, Nephthys, Isis and Horus). His brother Set usurped his throne and murdered him. Osiris posthumously impregnated his wife/ sister Isis who gave birth to their son/ brother Horus who triumphs

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Red Pyramid ascribes Champollion's efforts to magic: "You know that when Champollion first deciphered hieroglyphics, he fell into a coma for five days? He became the first man outside the House of Life to ever unleash their magic, and it almost killed him" (*The Red Pyramid* 230). In the novels, one of the Kanes' enemies-then-allies, the 200-year-old powerful French magician, Michel Desjardins, is the great-nephew of Champollion.

[13] Later, their Uncle Amos explains, "You see, as Egypt faded, its magic collected and concentrated into its remaining relics. Most of these, of course, are still in Egypt. But you can find some in almost every major museum. A magician can use these artifacts as focal points to work more powerful spells" (*The Red Pyramid* 75). While the relics contain power, Riordan clearly also gives power to recreations.

over Set and resurrects Osiris who takes his place as lord of the afterlife. With the cooperation of the gods, Horus takes over the throne and becomes the rightful king of Egypt. Iskander, the lector at the House of Life, explains that the gods' mortal forms die and the gods assume new forms: "Horus, who in one lifetime was their brother, was born into a new life as their son." As Sadie says, "That's confusing. … And a little gross" (*The Red Pyramid* 179-180). Set wants to rewrite the myth in which he lost power because his brother and sister gods trapped him, and he chooses America as the place to do it. Much like his character, Riordan sets out to rewrite Ancient Egyptian mythology for young audiences, and he strategically chooses to import this mythology to America in order to do it.[14]

Much like *Percy Jackson* and Riordan's four other mythology-inspired series (*The Heroes of Olympus, The Gods of Asgard,* and *The Trials of Apollo*), *The Kane Chronicles* posits that ancient gods roam the world and humans with clandestine powers secretly maintain the balance between these gods and the rest of the oblivious human race.[15] After

[14] It is worth noting that, while Riordan certainly uses the mythologies of ancient cultures as plot inspiration for his many stories, these books are not strict or even slightly-altered retellings in the style of many 19th- and early 20th-century children's books that watered down the original source material for moral or educational purposes. Percy, for example, differs from his namesake, Perseus, in many important ways; they are entirely separate characters. Similarly, while Carter and Sadie certainly take part in a battle between Set and his siblings, as in Ancient Egyptian myth, Riordan gives his teen protagonists their own stories and agency that allows the modern reader to examine the old myths from a place of criticism, often skepticism, and complexity.

[15] With five best-selling series about American teens interacting with ancient gods, Riordan has solidified his reputation as a post-modern Bulfinch. The *Percy Jackson* series (2005-2009) includes five books; its conceit is that Greek gods are roaming the earth and a seemingly normal American boy is the son of Poseidon. It makes its main setting New York state, specifically the Empire State Building as the door to Olympus and Long Island as home to Camp Halfblood where the demigods live and train, but the characters travel across the country, especially in the first book where they must enter the mouth of hell, which, of course, is located under Los Angeles. Similarly, *The Heroes of Olympus* (2010-2014), comprising five books, introduces Roman Gods into the modern world and situates Roman demigods in the southwestern desert. *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard* (2015-ongoing), places Norse gods in Boston, relying on the debunked 19th century theory that Vikings settled in Boston in the 11th century (that the Boston area was indeed the lost infamous Vinland). *The Trials of Apollo* (2016-ongoing) revisits Greek mythology from a fallen god's perspective as Apollo wrestles with becoming a modern teenager in New York. All five series are set in the same universe and some feature overlapping characters.

their father disappears while performing his spell using the Rosetta Stone, Carter and Sadie are soon whisked away by their estranged magician uncle, Amos, to Brooklyn, New York where they discover their family is part of The House of Life. The House is a millennia-old sect of magicians split into Nomes—or magical guilds—all over the world. When Carter confuses the term—"Gnome? […] Like those little runty guys?" (*The Red Pyramid* 52)—, Amos explains: "Nome, n-o-m-e. As in a district, a region. The term is from ancient times, when Egypt was divided into forty-two provinces. Today, the system is a little different. We've gone global. The world is divided into three hundred and sixty nomes. Egypt, of course, is the First. Greater New York is the Twenty-first" (52-3). The nomes' task is to keep Ancient Egyptian magic traditions alive and also keep the fractious Ancient Egyptian gods contained away from the world. That the practitioners of Ancient Egyptian magic are scattered across the world speaks to the diffuseness of Ancient Egyptian history and myth. Brooklyn House, which "look[s] like a cross between a modern museum and an ancient temple" (53), is the magical headquarters of the 21st nome; its location fits within Riordan's schema of calling upon historical strata of meaning. Amos explains why the house is in Brooklyn and not New York: "In ancient times, the east bank of the Nile was always the side of the living, the side where the sun rises. The dead were buried west of the river. It was considered bad luck, even dangerous, to live there. The tradition is still strong among ... our people" (*The Red Pyramid* 51-2). Riordan migrates this Ancient Egyptian superstition from the Nile to the Hudson River, overlaying the two landscapes. And, in *The Throne of Fire*, Riordan finds a more concretely American reason for Brooklyn House's location: the Brooklyn Museum. Among the most famous European Egyptologists of the nineteenth century (Francois

Champollion, Howard Carter, Auguste Mariette, Flinders Petrie, Adolf Erman, etc.), there are few Americans of note with some exceptions including Charles Edwin Wilbour (1833-1896) whose collections and library are housed at the Brooklyn Museum; "[p]lus, the Brooklyn Museum has the largest collection of Egyptian magic scrolls in the world. That's why our uncle Amos had located his headquarters in Brooklyn" (*Throne of Fire* 6). To explain his American sites, Riordan reaches into the layers and draws upon both the symbolic landscape—the left bank—and the tangible landscape—the Brooklyn Museum's collections.

Riordan carefully layers his own stories as well as historical ones. Uncle Amos gives another reason why the nome's headquarters is not situated in Manhattan: "Manhattan has other problems. Other Gods. It's best we stay separate" (*The Red Pyramid* 52). For readers of the *Percy Jackson* series, it is obvious that he refers to Mount Olympus, situated directly above the Empire State Building. The final Kane book, *The Serpent's Shadow*, leaves a tantalizing clue that the three series may overlap in the future. After defeating the serpent of chaos, Apophis, Carter ends the book: "there are still hotspots of evil magic and demon activity all over the world that we have to take care of. We've even got reports of unexplainable magic as close as Long Island. Probably have to check that out" (641-2). This knowing wink refers to Camp Half-blood in the *Percy Jackson* series. It's made quite clear that these layers are not meant to be in close contact. The impulse to keep these layers separate is futile, as the characters from different books ultimately need each other to fulfill certain quests. In this way, the books suggest that keeping representations free from cross-contamination is futile: in Riordan's worlds, the layers ultimately bleed into one another. Since 2013, Riordan has begun to merge the

Kane Chronicles more closely with the other series, making it clear in the three stories, "The Son of Sobek" (2013), "The Staff of Serapis" (2014) , and "The Crown of Ptolemy" (2015), that his major characters—the Greek demigods Percy and Annabeth and the wielders of Ancient Egyptian magic Carter and Sadie—can and do cross over, an elaborate layering that recognizes the influence each of these ancient cultures had on one another: "Alexander conquered Egypt and, after he died, his general Ptolemy took over. He wanted Egyptians to accept him as their pharaoh, so he mashed the Egyptian gods and the Greek gods together and made up new ones.' 'Sounds messy,' Sadie said. 'I prefer my gods unmashed'" ("Staff of Serapis" 41-2). The "mashing" of history, modernity, mythology and reality is the heart of the contiguous fantasy category and the heart of Riordan's characters. His strategy of bringing ancient non-American mythologies into the American landscape epitomizes his approach to shaking up these layers of representation, creating opportunity for humour as well as reimagining.

Riordan sets up tension between Western conceptions of the "Old World" and the "New World" by pitting Carter and Sadie against the ancient hierarchy of European and Egyptian magicians headquartered in in Cairo. Carter and Sadie travel through magical portals to Cairo, Egypt to learn about their powers at the First Nome, the central base and training center for all magicians using Ancient Egyptian magic. While there, they discover that the House of Life is corrupted, and the traditional approach to the threat of the gods— "binding and banishing them whenever they appear" (*The Red Pyramid* 77)—is no longer working. Based on their "most important law, issued by Chief Lector Iskandar in Roman times" (*The Red Pyramid* 77), the House of Life has made channeling gods and their powers as forbidden (and punishable by banishment and, possibly, death),

but Carter and Sadie realize that channeling the friendlier of the erratic gods is the only way to defeat Set: it takes a god's power to defeat a god. The House wishes to cling to tradition, but Carter and Sadie immediately see that tradition isn't working. As millennial Sadie puts it, "That's what you're worried about—just because of something our great-a-thousand-times grandparents did? That's completely daft" (*The Red Pyramid* 195). The failure on the part of the Cairo magicians to see that the mistakes of the past do not necessarily set the path for the future further sets up Riordan's strategy of American exceptionalism: the traditions of ancient Egypt are no longer working and cannot save America from the malevolent god Set. Carter and Sadie, young upstarts from the American nome Brooklyn House must prove the ancient order of magicians wrong in order to save the United States and the world. To achieve their goals, Carter and Sadie break with the First Nome and the rest of the House of Life, taking over their uncle's powerful nome in Brooklyn, New York, essentially offering what Riordan sets up as an "Old World" answer to a "New World" problem and relying on their own agency to do so. To do this, Carter and Sadie must use their natural gifts as descendants of powerful magician pharaohs and learn to channel the gods Horus and Isis to help recapture Set and ensure that the myth is once again rewritten with Set controlled.[16] While they have magical helpers along the way, like the cat goddess Bastet (who, in her modern manifestation, is obsessed with cans of tuna and fast cars and wears a Lycra cat suit), the teens must trust themselves and each other rather than older magicians or tradition. From their unique position as powerful magicians who had, until their father blew up the

[16] Later in the series, they must control chaos itself, the giant serpent Apophis of Ancient Egyptian myth.

Rosetta Stone, been unaware of their powers, Carter and Sadie are outsiders whose stubborn refusal to conform ends up saving the world.

Removing his protagonists from the traditional landscapes of Ancient Egyptian myths, Riordan makes use of a broad swath of the American continent as Sadie and Carter fulfill their rebellious quest, disrupting the traditional connection between landscape, history and mythology. The Kanes must track Set and his minions across the American landscape to Washington, D.C. and through Nashville and Memphis to New Orleans— essentially following the "Nile of America", the Mississippi,—and then West towards their ultimate confrontation at a magical pyramid in the Arizona desert where Set hopes to regain his destructive powers: "Phoenix. How appropriate! And the desert so much like home. All it needs now is to be scoured of life" (*The Red Pyramid* 64). That the villain chooses to build his powerful eponymous pyramid in the Arizona desert is an anachronism that shows Riordan's books go to great lengths to incorporate the American landscape into the fantasy. Essentially, a mythical battle with an Ancient Egyptian god becomes a good old-fashioned magical shoot-out on the familiar dusty stage of the American West. Using portal magic, Sadie then brings the entire pyramid, Set, and his demons to the foot of the Washington Monument. Neither ancient, nor Egyptian, the monument's sheer size and dominance over the Capitol Mall makes it the ultimate signifier of American dominance over Classical forms and of Riordan's outsized strategy of American landscape that rewrites and reinvents Classical stories in a way that rethinks how fantasy can interact with landscape.

2.2: From Tanglewood to Brooklyn House: Fantasy in the America

As children's fantasy, Riordan's books descend, in part, from the touchstone British fantasies that exploded in the nineteenth century and have come to define the genre, but they also fit into a somewhat slower and less overtly fantastical American tradition. As Lois Kuznets and others point out, fantasy literature for children developed quite differently on either side of the Atlantic. In the mid and late nineteenth century, *Phantastes* (1858), *The Water Babies* (1863), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871)[17] developed England's reputation for great fantasies for children—a reputation that has been little disturbed since—while Americans were establishing a reputation for the realist novel for children in novels such as *Little Women* (1868-69) and *Tom Sawyer* (1876). Kuznets describes the trajectory of American children's fantasy:

> The informal but pervasive reputation of the British for producing great fantasies for children and adults seems to have been formed during this era and it has been preserved almost intact for one hundred years, while what has been reserved for Americans is the tradition of the realistic novel for children—not always considered an honor, at least among children's literature circles in the United States. (Kuznets 19)

A reason for this early divide is the process in early American literature of what folklorists call *rationalization.* One of the few studies of the history of American fantasy,

[17] Mike Ashley and John Grant name George MacDonald as "the author who cornered the children's market" during the emergence of the fantasy genre. They also argue that MacDonald is the author who produced the first adult fantasy "thus demarcating the two genres." While many critics claim *Phantastes* as the first fantasy for children, Ashley and Grant argue that, although *Phantastes* was collected with fairytales in *Works of Fancy and Imagination* (1871), "[t]here is no way that *Phantastes* (1858) can seriously be regarded as CF [children's literature]. Instead, they argue "it was with *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) that MacDonald made the switch from fairytale to fantasy, and this was further strengthened by *The Princess and the Goblin* (1871) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883)" ("Children's Fantasy," *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*).

Brian Attebery's *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature,* traces rationalization in American fantasy,[18] the post-Enlightenment reconceptualization of folklore and fairytale elements as something other than real and the impulse to adapt, transmute and purge fantastic elements from stories.[19] Michael Levy and Farah Mendelsohn co-sign Attebery's argument: "The difficultly was that from its inception European-American culture had a strong tradition of outright opposition to the fantastic" (50).[20] When compared to the deep palimpsest of British children's fantasy, Riordan's books reinvent how landscape can be manipulated. However, Riordan's works and many other contemporary children's novels do not quite fit into the pervasive binary that Kuznets alludes to: American rationalization and realism on one hand and the heights of British fantasy on the other.

For Riordan, the vastness of the American landscape is the driving force behind his fantasy world, but Attebery points to the American landscape as a reason that Riordan's progenitors (early American fantasies for children) lagged behind their European counterparts.[21] The urge to constrain fantasy in American children's literature

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[18] See also Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child: American Children and Their Books, 1621-1922* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1994).

[19] Attebery examines the characteristics of early American society that absorbed fantasy elements from European traditions but changed them in order to insert more aspects of rationalization. He calls the process of creating an "American fairyland" "a slow, fitful one" (i) citing American credulity as an erosive force that pared away at the "marvelous" (16). In his book "Attebery attributes some of the early rationalization to the influence of Protestant Puritanism which clung to an orthodox demonology of its own, not to be idly toyed with. He also points to the practical concerns of the settlers, evoking a certain no nonsense grimness or Yankee 'commonsense' seemingly inimical to fantasy" (Kuznets 21).

[20] Levy and Mendlesohn suggest, as others have done, that early American literature allowed "some breathing room for allegory" such as those of Milton and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), but "these works were valued for their moral precepts rather than their fantastic imagination" (50). This thread follows through the 19th century when works by authors such as Mark Twain and Washington Irving where "magic in American fantasy is just another name for ingenuity" (51), and the tendency to explain away fantastic elements (whether through the narrator's suggestion the events are implausible, Gothic-inspired unmaskings, or other modes of rationalization) continued.

[21] Writing more broadly about the children's literature genre in *Making Americans: Children's Literature from 1930 to 1960*, Gary D. Schmidt agrees that American children's literature was slow to pick up steam and that even "in the 1920s American children's literature had yet to leave its European moorings" (ix).

continued throughout the nineteenth century as the genre gained popularity and focused on pastoral landscapes above fantasy ones. Bruce A. Ronda explains, "the first great age of writing for children took place in the United States in the 1870s, when [...] many Americans turned to the business of economic and geographic expansion. This great shift in the national culture, away from a largely rural and agricultural way of life, led inevitably to a kind of nostalgia for the [rural, pastoral] past" (Ronda 257).[22] Late nineteenth century American children's literature, then, while lagging behind its British counterparts in embracing fantasy worlds, struggled with its own particular brand of "restorative nostalgia." As I discussed in the introduction, Svetlana Boym distinguishes between two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia most closely aligns with earlier Romantic yearnings that so colour British children's literature: "Restorative nostalgia stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (xviii) and can be a dangerous and uncritical reading of the past that affects the present. She says *restorative nostalgia* "is not about memory and history but about heritage and tradition. It's often an *invented* tradition—a dogmatic, stable myth that gives you a coherent version of the past" (xviii). While older British fantasies often remove their child protagonists to an Otherworld or a pastoral space that relies on the Romantic nostalgic vision of the "natural" child, this nostalgia took a slightly different route in the U.S., where the myth of the rational American individual in a harsh landscape

[22] Ronda picks up on the essential role of space in American children's literature in his article "Lost in Space: The Child in the American Landscape." He explores two American children's texts, Scott O'Dell's *Sing Down the Moon* (1970) and Chester Aaron's *An American Ghost* (1973) in order to argue that both of these texts "participate in and subvert" the popular vision of the American pastoral landscape. Riordan's books, too, subvert the pastoral expectations of children's literature moving his characters across a variety of landscapes that are both urban and rural but certainly not stereotypically and traditionally pastoral.

dominated.[23] It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that America saw a major flowering of fantasy,[24] and, as Hunt argues, many of these fantasies were high fantasy—removed to other worlds—as opposed to contiguous fantasies set in the real world like those of Cooper, Garner and others writing in the British tradition at the same time.[25] While children's fantasy lagged behind in the nineteenth century America, a late flowering of twentieth century American fantasies recreated pseudo-medieval European worlds showing that American writers were just as affected by Tolkien's legacy as British writers. However, this turn towards pseudo-medieval Otherworlds also meant that there were few spaces for fantasy within the physical American landscape. The contiguous fantasy of Riordan's books does not descend simply from their earlier American counterparts as his books do not subdue the fantastic nor remove the characters to pastoral settings or an altogether separate high fantasy world.[26] Instead Riordan resists

[23] Kuznets, however, disagrees with the way in which Attebery constructs the American landscape as somehow anathema to fantasy. While Attebery "intimates in a rather vague way that the American landscape itself was somehow inhospitable as a setting for fantasy" (Kuznets 21), she argues "[n]o analysis of American fantasy can really afford to ignore how much of the fantastic impulse could be absorbed in our vast, uncultivated landscape, or even how much of the romantic-quest structure could find its modern medium in the American Western." Instead, Kuznets offers an alternative explanation for the lack of American fantasy in this period: "[t]o me, it seems as though it is the possibility of the *acting out of fantasy*, rather than real hostility to fantasy that controls the production of fantasy in nineteenth-century America" (Kuznets 25)

[24] Distinct from Science Fiction, which experienced a Golden Age in the 1920s and 1930s and a major resurgence with the New Wave of the 1960s and 1970s.

[25] Along the lines of Hunt, Kuznets takes issue with Attebery's broad strokes based on J.R.R. Tolkien's definition of fantasy. While Hawthorne and other writers figure as 19th-century forerunners, Attebery (as well as Levy and Mendlesohn, whose definition of fantasy is much broader) asserts that Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) was the first true American fantasy; Levy and Mendlesohn agree with Attebery, referring to Baum as "[t]he first truly important American fantasy writer for children" (59). However, Dorothy leaves Kansas behind for Oz (an Otherworld), and the narrative embraces an obvious nostalgia for the pastoral ideal (as Ronda describes). Given this, Kuznets argues it was not until the 1960s that American high fantasy comes into its own with writers such as Lloyd Alexander, Susan Cooper and Ursula K. Le Guin. Cooper, of course, is claimed by both British and American canons.

[26] While the *Percy Jackson* series certainly removes children to Camp Half-Blood in upstate New York (and interesting parallel to the tradition of organized American summer camps of the mid-century), the protagonists leave the seemingly pastoral space to enact quests outside in the world, a reversal of the earlier tradition of having the child protagonist retreat *into* the pastoral. Furthermore, I refer to the Camp Half-Blood as "seemingly pastoral" because, while it offers a safe retreat of woods and cabins, the camp is invested in military training, dangerous games involving ancient weaponry, and, on occasion, monsters.

rationalization that subdues the fantastic, turning it on its head. Instead, he uses real American landmarks to argue for the presence of fantasy within America's broad landscape. Riordan, in this way, draws from the British tradition but uses a much different type of palimpsest: his books move horizontally across the American expanse to broadly draw together layers to create depth under a wide area, whereas British fantasies plunge vertically into a deep and narrow set of layers and choose among the many unfathomable strata and before deciding which to penetrate.

Because earlier American children's fantasy did not have a tradition of magic in its landscape, the American landscape contains expectations of realism. British children's fantasy, on the other hand, cultivated the expectation that magic is hiding in plain sight in its landscape. It did this, in part, by relying on the mystical associations that come with age. British fantasies for children developed the idea that ancient sites can be reasonably expected to contain fantastic elements. Alan Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960) comes to mind as an example of a British fantasy that digs into the landscape of a small area that is rich with human history. As Charles Butler points out, Garner's books "all use extremely specific settings, to the extent that the first two [*Weirdstone* and *The Moon of Gomrath*] include maps, not of a fantasy land like Middle-earth but of the country around Alderly Edge in Cheshire" (Butler 45). This can be traced to the perceived magic of the British landscape: "For Garner, 'magic' is not simply foisted on the passive land by the writer's imagination. Rather, the writer perceives and communicates what is already latent (and sometimes not so latent) in the land itself" (Butler 46). The British landscape contains the expectation of magic because of its deep palimpsest.

Riordan plays with these expectations. Readers used to the conventions of fantasy don't expect American landmarks to be magical as they would a British castle or ring of standing stones. Rationalization and the history of American children's fantasy generally means that readers are not attuned to the idea that there is magic in the landscape by default. They certainly do not expect modern structures to be a part of the fantastic landscape, but they do expect shades of magic when considering the ancient sites of faraway places like the Ancient Egyptian pyramids. By drawing together American monuments with their Ancient Egyptian antecedents, Riordan infuses unexpected fantasy into the American landscape. By doing so, he also resists the pastoral nostalgia characteristic of many earlier American works for children. Riordan is not the first American writer to attempt to Americanize Classical mythology: one nineteenth-century example of rationalization and an early forerunner of children's fantasy in America is Nathaniel Hawthorne and his *Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* (1851) and *Tanglewood Tales for Boys and Girls* (1853), which relate especially to Riordan's work because Hawthorne, the first American writer to do so, also places non-religious European mythology within the American canon of literature written specifically for children and the American landscape.

Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*[27] offers an example of ancient mythology in the American landscape that depends on both pastoral and the nostalgic figurations of the child. Hawthorne also attempts to reinvigorate Ancient Greek myths as tales for children because "[t]he author has long been of opinion that many of the classical myths were capable of being rendered into very capital reading for children"

[27] Published by Ticknor, Reed and Fields in late 1851 but dated 1852.

(Preface). *Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* includes retellings of six Greek myths within a frame story set in Lenox, Massachusetts where Hawthorne once lived. Hawthorne believed that this project of liberating myths from scholarship and reinventing them for children could "entirely revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature" (qtd in Donovan 20).[28] In "'Very capital reading for children': Reading as Play in Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*," Ellen Butler Donovan argues that *Wonder-Book* did indeed mark a crucial moment in American children's literature because "[b]y moving the myths from the arena of scholarship and the schoolroom to the family drawing room and by encouraging a playful rather than reverential response from readers, Hawthorne encouraged reading as a pleasurable pastime activity for children" (20). Although Hawthorne had previously written for school series and children's annuals,[29] Donovan notes that he disliked writing for the juvenile market, which he saw as "drudgery" (qtd in Donovan 19). However, after the successes of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) freed him from the financial pressures of writing on commission, he turned back to child audiences with *Wonder-Book*. Aiming to invite children into a world of stories from which they had been previously excluded, Hawthorne's frame story centers upon student Eustace Bright who tells six Greek myths to his adoring younger cousins during his visits home from school.[30] Eustace brings his Classical learning home and reinvents it in a way that fits with what Attebery suggests about rationalization: "A general trend, since the landing of the Puritans, has been a paring away of the

[28] Hawthorne made this assertion in a letter to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow on March 21, 1838.
[29] Donovan notes Hawthorne's contributions to children's magazines *Youth's Keepsake*, *Boys' and Girls' Magazine* and *Child's Friend* in the 1830s.
[30] Eustace tells six tales: "The Gorgon's Head," "The Golden Touch," "The Paradise of Children," "The Three Golden Apples," "The Miraculous Pitcher," and "The Chimæra."

supernatural in those folk genres most amenable to its presence: ballads, tales and legends" (Attebery 16). While Hawthorne's Ancient Greek stories come from mythology full of magic and gods, their fantastic elements are watered down by Eustace's interjections, moralizing tone, and insistence that they are mere "stories."

Wonder-Book's frame story safely places the Greek myths within a contained realist landscape in keeping with the early American tradition of diluting fantasy. Hawthorne's chapter-by-chapter prologues regulate the fantastic elements of the story by placing each part of the telling in a safely bordered play space such as a pastoral area near a brook or the porch or the playroom of Tanglewood, a family estate where the cousins excitedly gather around Eustace to hear these gripping tales. Eustace, acting as an avatar for the author, invites the children into the stories by privileging their narrative power rather than their historical/ scholarly importance:

> 'I will tell you one of the nursery tales that were made for the amusement of our great old grandmother, the Earth, when she was a child in frock and pinafore. There are a hundred such; and it is a wonder to me that they have not long ago been put into picture-books for little girls and boys. But, instead of that, old gray-bearded grandsires pore over them in musty volumes of Greek, and puzzle themselves with trying to find out when, and how, and for what they were made.' (Hawthorne)

Eustace Bright's dismissal of those "old gray-bearded grandsires" poring over "musty volumes" certainly gestures towards the impulse of Riordan's books, which Riordan, a former history teacher, says he wrote because his son asked him "for bedtime stories about gods and heroes. I had taught Greek myths for many years, so I was glad to

comply. When I ran out of myths, he was disappointed and asked me if I could make up something new with the same characters" (Riordan Web site FAQ). Riordan's books seek to make myths pleasurable *and* informative reading, just like Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book*.

In this way, both Hawthorne and Riordan take what was privileged narrative and reinvent it for the masses. In "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children," Sheila Murnaghan examines Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series with two other series for young readers that rewrite Greek legends; she argues that Riordan's "Americanization" (344) of Greek legends fits "in the tradition of Hawthorne, but to a far greater extent" (348). Riordan's extraction of the Ancient Greek language from the vise of those "dusty grandsires" is significant, she says, because of "the change in status of Greek from Hawthorne's day, when it was associated with the fusty studiousness of Mr. Pringle. Now that no middle school child is in danger of being taught Greek, it can be associated with a hero [like Percy] who is thoroughly anti-academic" (349), certainly not an "old gray-bearded grandsire" (*Wonder-Book*).[31] Much like Riordan, Hawthorne translates the thrill and adventure of Greek myths for a young audience, arguing that "by their indestructibility itself, they are legitimate subjects for every age to clothe with its own garniture of manners and sentiment, and to imbue with its own morality" (Hawthorne Preface). Riordan and Hawthorne's books undoubtedly answer that challenge (as do many novels for children that have retold Greek myths since Hawthorne claimed Classical myth for American children). However, while *Wonder-*

[31] Murnaghan extends this observation about the Greek language in Percy, noting Percy Jackson's dyslexia is explained for Percy when he discovers part of his legacy is that his brain is hard-wired for ancient Greek: "Greek is so out it's in and carries a cachet that allows it to serve as a positive re-description of a stigmatizing 'diagnosis'" (349). Similarly, Sadie, who is thoroughly anti-academic (she's constantly teasing Carter for being a "nerd"), discovers that she can naturally read hieroglyphics.

Book may be exceptional in early American children's literature because it is the first to point to the relevance of ancient myths in the nursery for entertainment as well as pedagogy, it is hardly radical in the broader contexts of children's literature or the fantasy genre.

Although the Tanglewood estate is in America, the books do not interact with the American landscape on a meaningful level beyond a vague pastoralism of brooks, trees, and gardens, nor do they escape the didactic and moralizing tone that had long shaped American children's literature. In "Nathaniel Hawthorne: 'Revolutionizer' of Children's Literature?" Carol Billman argues that in *Wonder-Book* and its sequel, *Tanglewood Tales* (1853), "Hawthorne does not forsake the making-over inclinations exhibited in his earlier biographies […] he domesticates characters and situations and draws moral lessons from sometimes inconclusive tales" (111-112) through strategies that are on par with other instances of American rationalization. One of the reasons why these tales are "not harbingers of a new direction in children's literature" (Billman 112) is their setting.

The stories fit neatly into what Susan Honeyman calls "friendly spaces for children" (117) because they take place in locations like Hawthorne's "Shadow Brook" and "Tanglewood Play-Room."[32] Sandra Burr argues that the setting may not be the schoolroom, but it is still informed by the pedagogical goals of the text. She likens the scene to *Émile*: "[Hawthorne's] setting invites development precisely because it is safe and reassuring," she argues; "unruly violence does not, because it cannot, incline toward

[32] As Honeyman explains, "All of these friendly spaces, of course, are created by adult authors, not just for child characters, but for their own nostalgic indulgence […] The creator of childhood refuges must keep the 'reality' boundary clear, yet authenticate the space at the same time [… reinforcing] the fragile conceptual barriers that are necessary for preserving the concept of childhood as a simple, totalized social space. Indulging in the escapist pleasure of constructing nostalgic worlds for fictional children, adults must carefully enclose childhood to explain its inaccessibility, yet grasp it" (117).

rampant profusion. The children, perforce, tumble about a metaphoric prelapsarian garden, but they are rooted to it through the emotional, spiritual, and physical security it represents" (75). This "security" reinforces Rousseau's view of childhood that privileges the child's so-called natural inclinations and apparent innate connection with nature but only allows them freedom that is circumscribed and regulated. In *Wonder-Book,* the dangers and exploration of the ancient Greek world are left behind after Eustace has told stories like "The Gorgon's Head" or "The Chimæra," and added his own moral finger-wagging at characters like Pandora who has a "naughty little heart" (Hawthorne). The story always returns to the younger cousins, ensconced in their pastoral landscape at Tanglewood and exhilarated by their older cousin's most recent tale, but passive listeners nonetheless. At the same time that British writers like George MacDonald were drawing on traditions as diverse as German folklore and Arthurian legends to reach towards "new embodiments of old truths" ("The Fantastic Imagination") during what's known as the first Golden Age for children's literature in England, Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales* constrain their mythic sources within the safely-guarded play spaces of the American realist landscape (without carving a space within that landscape for American fantasy). By contrast, Riordan's wide-ranging landscapes participate more fully in the fantasy genre by making American spaces fantastic ones, and his protagonists must read the many layers of this landscape for themselves, making decisions about which knowledge to trust and which traditions to overturn; they are far from Hawthorne's children safely "tumble about a metaphoric prelapsarian garden." Space—the "linear matter" of "reaching westwards" (11) mentioned by Hunt—is an essential and troubling aspect of American literature. Riordan's texts work to reinvigorate the relationship

between fantasy and the American landscape. His contiguous fantasy does this by both "reach[ing] westward" (11) and incorporating the American landscape into the fantasy while inviting his protagonists to engage meaningfully with the layers of that landscape. Riordan's novels focus on privileging American space within Ancient Egyptian mythologies and achieve a lateral palimpsest that reaches across the space of the United States, but, since his protagonists are unbound by circumscribed spaces and are also children of the post-millennial generation that have grown up in the age of globalization, he also makes use of global spaces.

2.3: Fitting America into a Global Palimpsest

In *The Red Pyramid*, Carter and Sadie's disappointing visit to the First Nome in Cairo and their independent decision in the next two books to train other young magicians at Brooklyn House in defiance of Cairo's rules shows that the texts are not confined by space, but rather invested in the privileging of the American spaces. Carter and Sadie choose Brooklyn House—and America—as their base because it represents their rebellion against an ancient hierarchy order that is no longer working. Unlike earlier trans-Atlantic literature that may end its journey on the refuge of American shores or the climactic race into the challenges and rewards of the frontier, the characters move back and forth between America, the main setting, and Europe and Northern Africa using magic portals, thereby integrating America into a global history with an ease indicative of the post-Internet world. The children are not confined by the rules of a bounded space that confers strictures upon immigration and emigration (magic travel does not require a passport or a security check by the TSA), and America offers a kind of Wild West for

both young people and Ancient Egyptian gods seeking to create new rules. Riordan is not alone in his use of a modern American contiguous fantasy landscape that also refers back to British and European spaces. Many of the new American children's fantasies, such as Michael Scott's *The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel* series (2007-2012) inhabit space expansively, and several use their reach to bring America into world mythologies from which it had previously been excluded.[33]

Contemporary communication networks make the project of bringing Classical mythologies into the American landscape easier, shrinking the vast spaces between America and landscapes with deeper palimpsests. One notable example is Scott's *The Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel*,[34] which works similarly to *The Kane Chronicles* in its incorporation of myths in American landscapes.[35] In terms of modern

[33] Apart from Michael Scott's series, Henry H. Neff's *The Tapestry* (2007-2012), Maile Meloy's *The Apothecary Series* (2011-2015), and John Stephens' *The Books of the Beginning* (2011-2015) place magic elements in consensus reality and move across large spaces. James A. Owen's *The Chronicles of the Imaginarium Geographica* (2006-2013) also inhabits space expansively while moving in and out of consensus reality. *The Gideon Trilogy* (2006-2008) by Linda Buckley-Archer does something similar using time slips.

[34] Scott's series of six books (2007-2012) is often marketed as young adult, but its tone and the age of its protagonists are strikingly similar to Riordan's. I am uninterested in deciding on age ranges for children's books; however, as Mendlesohn and Levy point out, "It is very noticeable that the age at which fiction especially aimed at children is pitched has gradually been extended" (6). Mendlesohn and Levy point out that recent books that fit into the Young Adult category usually feature older teens and even adults in their early 20's. Carter and Sadie start the series at ages 14 and 12, fitting them firmly into, by Mendlesohn and Levy's definition, children's literature. Scott's twins start his books at the age of 15; it may be fair to suggest that Scott's series sits at the hazy literary border of young teen and late childhood, though this target is constantly shifting.

[35] The forerunner to both of these series is *American Gods* (2001), an adult fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman (very recently adapted, with great fanfare, for television). Gaiman's novel supposes that immigrants to America brought their gods with them but, over the years, as belief in the old gods has waned, the gods' powers have also waned. For example, rather than making judgments in the Egyptian afterlife's kingdom of death, Anubis, along with Thoth and Bastet (in the form of a housecat), runs a funeral parlor in Cairo, Illinois. In their place, new America gods have emerged such as Technical Boy, the god of computer and the Internet, and the Intangibles, gods of the modern stock market. It is interesting, as well, that Gaiman chooses to place his follow-up book, *Anansi Boys*, about the sons of the West African trickster god and spinner of tales, Anansi, in London. I won't examine these novels here because they are not works of children's literature and not subject to the same genre traditions; however, Gaiman's allegory of older cultures adapting to find their own place among the threats of the new world certainly anticipates *Percy Jackson's* Mount Olympus hovering over the "heart of Western civilization" at the Empire State Building and *The Kane Chronicles'* powerful obelisk, the Washington Monument.

contiguous fantasies, *Nicholas Flamel* is an apt comparison because it also focuses on American siblings who are struggling with ancient gods in a modern landscape. However, the dizzying array of mythologies at work in Scott's novels contrasts with Riordan's more controlled Ancient Egyptian pantheon. The novels feature a set of 15-year-old twins, Sophie and Josh Newman; they befriend the immortals Nicholas and Perenelle Flamel, who are running a bookshop in San Francisco. Sophie and Josh quickly discover that they are the subject of a prophecy, have dangerous magical powers and are being hunted by all manner of evil deities as well as the malevolent magician John Dee. They interact with a range of characters from myth and folklore ranging from Prometheus to Quetzalcoatl to Saint Germain to Bastet. In *The Immortal Secrets of Nicholas Flamel*, Scott also employs a lateral palimpsest to compress both time and space. The books sew together American and European landscapes and, thus, mythologies. Scott brings together American legends like Billy the Kid and Virginia Dare with European gods like Mars and Odin. These strategies correspond with Riordan's strategy in *The Kane Chronicles*, but since Riordan chooses one mythology, its layering with the American landscape is more deliberate and smoother to discern and explore. Scott's books also end with a fight at a giant pyramid (set in the fantasy realm of Danu Talis, or Atlantis), drawing on powerful associations with Ancient Egypt. But Riordan's choice to stick with one mythology allows him to be much more circumspect in the structures and symbols that he chooses to privilege within the landscape. His Ancient Egyptian focus throughout makes the layers of the landscape clearer.[36]

[36] One of those layers is Ancient Egypt's long history in English literature. The integration of the Ancient Egyptian and American landscapes sets *The Kane Chronicles* apart from the Gothic tradition from which much children's literature involving Ancient Egypt takes its strategy. Novels like Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Bram Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) show Ancient Egyptian powers as something

2.4: Claiming Ancient Egypt: American Appropriations

What is so intriguing about Riordan's strategy is that, while *The Red Pyramid* layers ancient mythologies formed thousands of years before the advent of the United States of America and, indeed, of Britain as we now know it, the landscapes are not without American strata of historical meaning. Ancient Egypt makes a worthwhile signifier because many claim it. As magician Amos Kane explains to his niece and nephew:

> The Ancient Egyptians were not fools, Carter. They built the pyramids. They created the first great nation state. Their civilization lasted thousands of years… Next to the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans were babies. Our modern nations like Great Britain and America? Blinks of an eye. The very oldest root of civilization, at least of Western civilization, is Egypt. Look at the pyramid on the dollar bill. Look at the Washington Monument—the world's largest Ancient Egyptian obelisk. Egypt is still very much alive. And so, unfortunately, are her gods. (*The Red Pyramid* 72).

Here, the great age of the Ancient Egyptian civilization places Great Britain and America in the same category. Instead of comparing the American palimpsest to Britain's deeper

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that comes from abroad as a malignant force to infect London. In "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal," Ailise Bulfin relates a familiar narrative: "The typical plot turns upon modern English trespass into an Ancient Egyptian tomb, the misappropriation and removal of a mummy or its artifacts back to England, and the unleashing of a curse which sees an ancient supernatural invader exacting revenge in the heart of the imperial metropolis" (Bulfin 413). Bulfin places these popular narratives in the context of the British anxiety surrounding the building of the Suez Canal and, later, the imperial conquests in Egypt that centered on its control: the so-called "Egyptian Question." However, these gothic novels set the pattern that many children's fantasy novels featuring Ancient Egypt follow: the representation of Ancient Egypt as something malevolent and foreign that threatens and infects is prevalent in contemporary children's fantasy which continues to rely on narratives that reflect anxieties about imperialism. While these series, at least on the surface, set up Ancient Egypt as a force that infects, *The Kane Chronicles* rejects the typical Gothic narrative outright. Instead, Riordan claims Ancient Egypt for America by integrating it directly and inextricably into the modern American landscape.

one, Amos suggests that Ancient Egypt makes "babies" of other histories, essentially creating an even playing field between America and its European counterparts. They are all "babies" or "blinks of an eye" when it comes to Ancient Egypt, so the American control of their connection to and with Ancient Egypt—the pyramid on the dollar bill, the *largest* obelisk—brings power by association. With its giant obelisk at the heart of its capital, America demarcates itself as the favourite child among the infant nations. Ancient Egypt remains larger-than-life because it is untouchable, mysterious yet powerful, and that exaggerated status makes it ripe for appropriation.

This strategy of association with Ancient Egypt is not new to America; Riordan is, in fact, drawing upon strata of association built up during the nineteenth century. The recognition of the symbolic power of Ancient Egypt's shapes and symbols can be traced throughout the millennia of history since that civilization's final collapse, but it is the nineteenth century's obsession with all things Ancient Egyptian that fully brought Egyptomania to Europe and, later, to America. As we can see in the architecture of many nineteenth-century American buildings and memorials, America took its Egyptomania seriously. This all started with Egyptomania's grip on Europe during the age of archaeological exploration as far back as Napoleon's well-publicized conquests in Northern Africa; it reached a zenith in Britain and America in the mid-nineteenth century when Ancient Egyptian decoration become vogue and continued into the fashions of the 1920s and '30s. Although—or perhaps because—America was not a large part of the history of Napoleonic exploits in Egypt, the battles fought between Nelson and Napoleon for control of the Nile, or as directly involved in the political jockeying surrounding the building and control of the Suez Canal that consumed much of European politics, it

nonetheless got swept up in the Egyptomania craze of the nineteenth century. Home décor, music, cigarettes, and public architecture are just some ways Americans expressed their enthusiasm for Egyptomania. Riordan taps into the long history America has with appropriating Ancient Egyptian symbols and claiming kinship with that storied civilization.[37]

America's relationship with Ancient Egypt took a twisting path, part of a long history of American self-fashioning through the appropriation of ancient cultures. America defined itself against nineteenth-century Europe, but it did so by commandeering symbols of the Classical World's ancient roots. Scott Trafton explains,

> That representations of the ancient world played an overdetermined part in the formation of variously configured American identities was especially the case in the nineteenth century, when the definitions of "America" were being so visibly manufactured. […] It had cities named Athens, Sparta, Columbia, and Rome. But the national architecture for this ostensibly Christian nation was taken from non-Christian cultures, and it also had cities named Memphis, Cairo, Alexandria, and Thebes. It had the same Grecian forms for state capitols as for plantation big houses, it was excavating in its own earth the ruins and evidences of its own history of ancient civilizations, and it had as its central suture throughout almost all of its first full century a 2,300 mile seam referred to over and over again as ''the Nile of America." (Trafton 14-15)

Abraham Lincoln made the most famous instance of this association between the Mississippi and Nile Rivers (and geographical wealth of the American and Ancient

[37] Ancient Egypt, in the conception of Egyptomania, is a monolithic vision of the long, culturally and politically varied period.

Egyptian civilizations) in his second annual message to Congress on Dec. 1, 1862 when he called for the erasure of any "lines of separation" in order to keep whole the "Great Egypt of the West" (Lincoln). Carter and Sadie are fighting to keep the chaotic forces of Ancient Egyptian mythology from devouring the world, but they are also fighting to keep this "Egypt of the West" intact and free at what is America's most recognizable monument to the American Revolution: the Washington Monument. The Washington Monument symbolizes American independence as a republic by appropriating the obelisk shape that echoes the longevity and might of the Ancient Egyptian empire. However, the Washington Monument is relatively modern compared to objects of power found in much of children's fantasy, such as Cooper's Celtic grail. Riordan's use of the Washington Monument and, for example, the "authentically" Ancient Egyptian Cleopatra's Needle in Central Park, places modern recreations on par with antiquities.

Riordan gives power to the Washington Monument and other modern recreations derived from Ancient Egypt by focusing on the power of forms and symbols rather than age. At one point in *The Red Pyramid*, the Kanes travel to Paris to steal an ancient spell book that is the key to controlling Set. They wish to return to America with the book and use it against their enemy, but they end up being chased through the streets of Paris by an unfriendly magician. Sadie uses the Louvre's distinctly modern glass pyramid to desperately open a portal to the USA, hoping that travelling to America will help them escape the dangers of antagonistic French magicians and vengeful gods.[38] With no

[38] In *The Red Pyramid*, Michel Desjardins becomes the head of the House of Life and wishes to continue the magical sect's age-old rules about exterminating and containing the Ancient Egyptian gods. Following in their father's footsteps, Carter and Sadie discover that channeling and working with many of the gods is the only way to contain the troublesome god Set and to deal with the larger battle that is coming against the serpent of chaos, Apophis. Unfortunately, the House of Life comes after the pair for not following the rules of containment. The American nome, Brooklyn House, predictably becomes the rogue forerunner of a

particular destination in mind other than the Unites States, Sadie's portal lands them inside the observation rooms at the Washington Monument: Bast—the cat goddess and the Kanes' helper who was once freed from eternal prison by their mother, whose spell took her life—clarifies that the monument is "the default portal for the U.S.—the largest single source of Egyptian power in North America" (*The Red Pyramid* 239). Sadie's spell for a portal to America leads them automatically to this nineteenth-century creation, the centre of American power (Carter, looking out the window, immediately points out the White House). A loud humming surrounds them, and Bast explains where the mysterious vibrations are coming from:

> "What is that?" I asked. "The wind?"
>
> "Magic energy," Bast said. "I told you, this is a powerful monument."
>
> "But it's modern. Like the Louvre pyramid. Why is it magic?"
>
> "The Ancient Egyptians were excellent builders, Sadie. They picked shapes—obelisks, pyramids—that were charged with symbolic magic. An obelisk represents a sunbeam frozen in stone—a life-giving ray from the original king of the gods, Ra. It doesn't matter when the structure was built: it is still Egyptian." (*The Red Pyramid* 242)

This emphasis on intention, the very shape of the building, rather than its age or history, neatly fits into Riordan's strategy. He can both claim that the building is from the coveted category of "origin"—drawing upon *nostos*—because Ancient Egyptian mythology is older than many other pantheons, and he can also make the Washington Monument and other relatively newer American sites fantastical because he underscores the importance

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dangerous path that pays off and saves the world by the end of the series, proving to the ancient hierarchy of magicians, like Desjardins, that the old rules no longer work.

of the shape of the obelisk over its age, thereby satisfying *algia*. The monument can stand for the power of America and the lingering influence of Ancient Egypt simultaneously. Its age doesn't matter. So, while the Washington Monument is an American-built and relatively modern structure—Carter's assertion that a monument Americans consider historic is "modern" shows that even the American child protagonist sees age as relative—Riordan can place it in the same category as "authentic" Ancient Egyptian structures residing in the American landscape. The nineteenth-century obsession with all things Ancient Egyptian led to the two most famous obelisks in America, one new and one original: the building of the Washington Monument and the installation of the Cleopatra's Needle in New York's Central Park.

These obelisks were symbols of power for a nation that wished to align itself with and emulate what it saw as the first and longest running of all great empires, and Riordan's use of them as power-laden landscapes reaffirms this appropriation. Cleopatra's Needle, built in 1450 BCE in Heliopolis, was imported to New York during the height of American Egyptomania. In *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity*, Elliott Colla explains, "For rising empires, both ancient and modern, Egypt has always been a symbol of ancient sovereignty whose power might be grasped through acquisition (or reproduction) of its monumental objects—hence the conspicuous placement of obelisks in Rome, London, Paris, New York, and Washington" (Colla 21). Bob Brier, in his book *Egyptomania*, traces the journeys of these famous obelisks as Egyptomania drove major world cities to acquire these "symbol[s] of ancient sovereignty" (Colla 21). In 1878, to great fanfare and popular interest, London erected its Cleopatra's Needle on the bank of the Thames not far from

Westminster, and, Brier says, “New York was suffering from obelisk envy” (Brier 112). In the nineteenth century, Rome had at least eight ancient obelisks that were taken from Egypt during the Classical period’s years of conquest and conflict. Rome’s needles had waxed and waned in popularity over the centuries, in some cases, like the Lateran obelisk—the largest ancient obelisk in the world—untouched for hundreds of years before being rediscovered and reinstalled in the Renaissance as a triumphant reminder of the supremacy of Christianity over paganism. Paris had the L'aiguille de Cléopâtre—the Luxor obelisk—in the Place de Concord, where the guillotine once stood, installed in 1833 as a symbol of peace and, undoubtedly, a reminder of the French adventures in Egypt.

By 1878, London had its ancient obelisk, and New York wanted its own. The city set out, at great cost and logistical effort, to bring one to America. The New York Cleopatra’s Needle is one of a pair built ca. 1450 BCE at the command of the Pharaoh Thutmose III in Heliopolis, removed to Alexandria by the Romans, gifted by Egypt’s Khedive to America during a time of immense Egyptian political instability in 1879, and brought from Alexandria to New York—its twin is the London needle that had sparked such popular excitement. Maybe it is because the Romans moved the London-New York pair to a temple built by Cleopatra in 12 BCE that the three obelisks in Paris, New York and London (each visited by the Kanes in the series) are all called “Cleopatra’s Needle,” but they were all carved a millennium before her lifetime. As Carter, Sadie and their father arrive at the London needle in the first chapter of *The Red Pyramid*, Carter submits, “[I]t doesn’t have anything to do with Cleopatra. I guess the British just thought the name sounded cool when they brought it to London” (*The Red Pyramid* 12). The

moniker, no doubt, was given to increase their mystery and popularity by associating the much older obelisks with Ancient Egypt's most popular and storied leader.

It seemed that all the great cities of the world had ancient obelisks triumphantly installed in public spaces, so when New York acquired its own obelisk, the city went to great trouble to celebrate the event as it metaphorically placed itself alongside these other great world cities. When the cornerstone for New York's obelisk was installed in New York's Central Park, within view of the then brand new Metropolitan Museum of Art, on October 9, 1880, thousands of Freemasons marched through the streets of New York to the park where they performed an elaborate ceremony. As the authors of *Obelisk: A History* point out, obelisks mean different things to different nations at different times:

> Obelisks, everyone seems to sense, connote some very special kind of power. […] But the simple association of obelisks with political might is too simple. For though they have always been associated with power, obelisks have not always represented the same sort of power or represented power in the same way. Partly because they are so inscrutable, partly because they serve no practical purpose, obelisks have served as a sort of Rorschach test for civilizations. (Curran et al. 7)

Since both of the American obelisks that Riordan uses—the "original" in Central Park and the Washington Monument's "modern copy"—have strong ties to Freemasons (Freemasons took part in laying the cornerstones for both structures), Riordan's novel alludes to American freemasonry's links with pharaonic and mystical power. Riordan's references to the American dollar bill's pyramid and the "All Seeing Eye"—symbolically related to the Eye of Horus and associated with Freemasonry—serve a similar purpose. He makes clear the history of appropriating Ancient Egypt's symbolic power at

America's very foundations, but he also renews the symbolic power of these appropriations by giving them actual magical power within the fantasy.

The Central Park obelisk is an example of this renewal. The New York needle was installed during a snowstorm on that January day in 1880, but its installation drew a massive crowd nonetheless. At the time, the needle was a cause for celebration, curiosity and wonder, but, over the last century, it became neglected as the park's trees and city's skyline increasing dwarfed it, and the memory of Egyptomania faded from New Yorkers' minds. The Central Park needle no longer draws such avid crowds, so when the Kane siblings need a magic gateway in Central Park, they head for this unobtrusive obelisk to tap its power. Carter describes it as fairly abandoned:

> A little over seventy feet tall, it looked like an exact copy of the needle in London. It was tucked away on a grassy hill, so it actually felt isolated, which is hard to achieve in the center of New York. There was no one around except a couple of joggers farther down the path. I could hear the traffic behind us on Fifth Avenue, but even that seemed far away. (*The Red Pyramid* 123)

Riordan points to the needle's neglected state; America has moved on from Egyptomania, but the evidence of that movement is still a part of its landscape. It is a layer in the American palimpsest, a physical manifestation of the politics, passions and popular culture of the late nineteenth century as well as the power, workmanship, and mysteries of Ancient Egyptian culture. Riordan reinvigorates the needle by giving it power (and draws it back to its origins by suffusing it with Ancient Egyptian magic) while staking a claim for America within the matrix of that power; this needle is definitely New York's needle. While at the neglected obelisk, Carter's feeling of isolation evokes older fantasy

(a ruin in a garden or park recalls many pastoral spaces in children's literature), but the joggers and traffic make it clear that they are in the middle of a very real city with a very real history. Correspondingly, a 3,500-year-old obelisk seems out of step with the boisterous modernity of Fifth Avenue. Riordan's choice of the New York obelisk taps into ambitions of empire and masonic mythology, but it simultaneously takes part in the living landscape of the American city where it is situated. Sadie, her magical power tapped out, fails to open a portal at the Central Park obelisk,[39] so she and Carter make a mad dash for the much more public Temple of Dendur inside the Met, another "authentic" Ancient Egyptian artifact, albeit one that is prominently displayed inside a protective glass wing of New York's premier museum.

While Riordan's book was published in 2005, it seems his interest in reinvigorating these links to Ancient Egypt, and the neglected Central Park needle in particular, was anticipatory. Recently the New York needle was again the subject of political maneuvering when, in 2011, Zahi Hawass, the outspoken then minister of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, called for New Yorkers to properly take care of their decaying obelisk or lose it. In a letter to New York officials he wrote, "If the Central Park Conservancy and the City of New York cannot properly care for this obelisk, I will take the necessary steps to bring this precious artifact home and save it from ruin" (Foderaro A21). In response, the Met launched a series of lectures and an exhibition in the Spring of 2014 to accompany the refurbishment of the needle by the Central Park Conservancy Department. It seems all things Ancient Egyptian are in fashion again.

[39] Sadie's inability to tap her power at New York's needle references their mother's failure (and death) at its twin, the London Cleopatra's Needle.

2.5: Pyramids in America: Reproductions and the nostalgic turn

Other than "real" antiquities and nineteenth-century reproductions, Riordan also gives power to large-scale American anachronistic representations, like the pyramid-shaped Luxor Hotel and Casino on the Las Vegas strip and the Memphis Pyramid in Tennessee. These modern spaces create a temporal disruption by both bringing the past closer and ensuring that it is unattainable. The Luxor, for example, clearly conjures associations with the Ancient Egyptian past. It is, after all, a pyramid in the desert. In *The Throne of Fire*, it is where the Ancient Egyptian god of moonlight, Khonsu, has a penthouse. In one of the major myths of the Ancient Egyptian pantheon, Thoth, the god of wisdom, played a board game with the moon (in some tellings Khonsu[40]) and won five days of moonlight to create the five extra days of the year.[41] *The Kane Chronicles* portrays Khonsu as a consummate gambler whose appetite is sated by the lavishness of Vegas: "'I haven't devoured a soul in…what month is this? March? At any rate, I have completely adapted to this modern world. I'm quite civilized now. You should see my penthouse at the Luxor in Las Vegas. I mean, *Thank you!* America has a proper civilization!'" (*Throne of Fire* 386). Here, Khonsu's bloodthirsty ancient appetites are somewhat channeled into the indulgences of the strip; rather than sating himself with souls, he can gorge on the extravagances available in Las Vegas' permissive atmosphere. The hedonism of Las Vegas' strip, in turn, is somewhat tempered relative to the mythical extravagances of the gods: When Khonsu says, "America has a proper civilization!" he comically equates all of America with the Vegas strip, making Vegas a cypher for

[40] Riordan chooses to have Nut gamble directly with Khonsu, rather than having Thoth as an intermediary.
[41] This foundation myth explains why there are 365 days in the year. "Nut", Geraldine Pinch in *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002).

American identity and poking light-hearted fun at American ideals of consumerism and showmanship.

Interestingly, Carter describes Khonsu as looking "about twenty, thin and tall and kind of glamorous. […] The biggest piece of bling was a silver crescent amulet. When his fingers drummed on the back of my chair, his rings and platinum Rolex flashed. If I'd seen him in the mortal world, I might've guessed he was a young Native American billionaire casino owner" (*Throne of Fire* 384). Although no casinos on the Las Vegas strip are native-owned, Riordan manages to connect this anachronistic Ancient Egyptian building with the insatiable appetites of ancient gods and the appetites of pleasure-seeking Las Vegas visitors, while at the same time making a connection to the American landscape of native-owned casinos, forming his own representational strata that digs into the American palimpsest. But he also critiques Khonsu's penchant for accumulating wealth, as he clearly sets this character up as an antagonist that the siblings must deal with to get to their next goal. The Kanes must win three hours from Khonsu to achieve their goals and save the world, but Khonsu doesn't let them get away with their winnings easily. Their friend, the dwarf god Bes, must sacrifice his ren, or true name, to Khonsu as a part of the game, and, while the Kanes eventually retrieve Bes from his exile in the underworld, the loss of Bes is a major blow.

The pharaohs' legendary taste for gratification and wealth no doubt inspired Las Vegas' Luxor hotel. Customers can enjoy a sanitized version of pharaonic epicureanism within a simulacrum of an Ancient Egyptian pyramid. The simulacrum features a mirrored pyramidal structure, a stone obelisk sporting the hotel's logo, a large sphinx overlooking grounds full of pools and palm trees, and cartoonish depictions of Ancient

Egyptian engravings surrounding an IMAX theatre. A slate of amenities allows the customer to play Cleopatra for their visit, as long as they don't think too much about the actual historical figures and places being simulated. Consider the anachronism too closely and it alienates the historical associations that it invokes: on the outside, it is a modern glass as opposed to ancient stone and, at its core, it is, after-all, a money-making casino and hotel as opposed to a mysterious tomb. In her work on anachronism in Shakespeare, Phyllis Rackin suggests, "anachronistic intrusions of present reality tend to contaminate the idealized object of desired recuperation" (99). The anachronism of a luxury resort pyramid in the heart of the Las Vegas strip pushes away from authenticity. It embodies "the recognition of temporal distance that alienate[s] a nostalgic present from a lost historical past" (Rackin 91). Riordan plays with this alienation, often for comic and tragic effects like with Khonsu. While inviting Khonsu into the Luxor allows these American anachronisms the power to recreate and modernize mythologies within the American landscape, this sequence also offers an implicit critique of American consumerism, drawing on the more troubling aspects of how Ancient Egypt has been interpreted by modern culture. In this way, *The Kane Chronicles* invites layers of historical association and temporal distance to work together. Riordan introduces another anachronistic pyramid that plays with "temporal distance that alienate[s] a nostalgic present from a lost historical past" (Rackin 91): the Memphis Pyramid, another American Pyramid devoted to entertainment.

A glass pyramid rising above the banks of the "Nile of America" (the Mississippi) in a city with an Egyptian name, the Memphis Pyramid is both an anachronism, in that it is a recreation of an Ancient structure, as well as an abandoned building that resonates

with its predecessors by virtue of its disuse. While they were in Paris, Carter and Sadie stole the fabled Book of Thoth in order to retrieve a spell that could subdue Set. They make their way to Memphis to seek out Thoth's help in using the spell. Thoth, the Egyptian god of knowledge, is making himself a new American home in the Memphis Pyramid along the banks of the Mississippi River.[42] Carter, thinking of Set's red pyramid in the Arizona desert, "suddenly pictured gods building monuments all over the U.S." (*The Red Pyramid* 312), and asks Thoth where the glass pyramid came from. Thoth—echoing Bast's explanation of the form of the Washington Monument and Amos' explanation of Ancient Egyptian symbols—explains that the shapes and symbolism of Ancient Egypt are embedded in human consciousness: "Thoth chuckled. 'I didn't have to build it. The people of Memphis did that. Humans never really forget Egypt, you know. Every time they build a city on the banks of a river, they remember their heritage, buried deep in their subconscious. This is the Pyramid Arena—sixth largest pyramid in the world'" (*The Red Pyramid* 312). The glass pyramid—complete with a Ramesses the Great statue on the steps leading to it[43]—was built as a sports arena. Essentially, the gods don't need to build monuments; Americans already do build Ancient Egyptian structures for them, inviting Ancient Egypt into the American landscape. Riordan's repetition that

[42] Formerly a sports arena, the Memphis Pyramid reopened in 2015 as a Bass Sports Pro megastore complete with hotel and an archery range. When Riordan wrote about the pyramid it was not in use, and its languishing state was the subject of many local debates.

[43] The 25-foot statue was relocated to the University of Memphis in 2012. A tantalizing parallel to the Memphis statue's journey is the 2006 move of the 3,200-year-old original statue of Ramesses II that was moved from Cairo to Giza for conservation purposes. While the Egyptian version is more than three millennia old and made of limestone and the Memphis version is a 1990s replica made of fiberglass, both were relocated in order to preserve them from ruin (in Egypt, the pollution and environment in Cairo threatened the statue, and, in Tennessee, the Pyramid was leased by a company that had no use for the statue). Both statues were given a new lease on life, and both have a history in their landscapes: the replica was created after the 1987 "Ramesses the Great" exhibit in Memphis that drew large crowds, prompting locals to ask the Egyptian government for permission to make the replica. It's now housed outside the University of Memphis Department of Egyptology.

the Ancient Egyptian forms, and the cultural reproduction of these forms as deeply embedded within a larger conception of human narrative, refuses to privilege objects or landscapes of origin.

At the time that Riordan's books were written, the Memphis Pyramid was empty, but Riordan gives it a purpose by making it Thoth's home: "the arena fell on hard times. It's been abandoned for years. Well, no longer. I'm moving in" (*The Red Pyramid* 313). Built in 1991, the pyramid—originally called the "Great American Pyramid"—was meant to be a major attraction, but it ran into numerous problems including an opening day flood, unfinished upper floors, an incomplete outdoor elevator and the loss of a contract from the Grizzlies National basketball Association team who only played there until the new FedEx Forum was built, leaving the pyramid essentially abandoned by 2004. The hubris associated with building a giant Ancient Egyptian structure in an American city suggests a problematic nostalgia that attempts to fuse together pharaonic power and wealth with the American exceptionalism of the age of nineteenth-century Egyptomania and modern American capitalist opportunism. Boym suggests, "[a] cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface" (viii-vix). However, moving Thoth into this structure reclaims it from ruin, but more than that, privileges the newer recreation.

Carter's recognition that the modern glass pyramid in Memphis constitutes a structure just as valid as the original Ancient Egyptian pyramids on the banks of the Nile demonstrates the degree to which Riordan's text refuses to give in to nostalgia that would

privilege the ancient over the modern. Carter describes an appealing scene when he first sees the Tennessee pyramid: "The sun was setting, turning the river and the pyramid to gold. On the pyramid's front steps, next to a twenty-foot-tall pharaoh statue labeled Ramesses the Great, Thoth had set out a picnic with barbecued ribs and brisket, bread and pickles, the works" (*The Red Pyramid* 312). Thoth is enamoured with Southern cuisine, culture, and music, diving into his American life with aplomb in a House of Blues T-shirt (*The Serpent's Shadow* 124). This Ancient Egyptian god marvels over stereotypical American culture again and again (recall his fascination with Elvis' ankh), performing "American" as he plays an electric guitar and refers to Southern BBQ as "magic." In his new home, Thoth keeps the basketball stadium with a few magical additions—"[h]anging from the girders, instead of championship banners and retired numbers, were black tapestries embroidered with gold incantations" (125)—but adds a science laboratory, gourmet kitchen, TVs, and all the comforts of a modern home. The teen Carter approves: "I'll say this for Thoth. He knew how to decorate a pyramid" (*The Serpent's Shadow* 125). This is far from the way Carter describes feeling about the inside of authentic Ancient Egyptian spaces: "—tunnels inside pyramids, tombs my dad had excavated—… I've never liked them. Millions of tons of rock above me seemed to crush the air out of my lungs" (*The Red Pyramid* 148). The glass pyramid, especially with Thoth's redecoration and veneration of American culture, impresses Carter compared to the originals: "If you ever visit the pyramids, here's a tip: the best place to see them is from far away, like the horizon" (*The Throne of Fire* 323). Carter explains why he finds the pyramids less impressive close up:

> The closer you get, the more disappointed you'll be. That may sound harsh, but first of all, up close, the pyramids are going to seem smaller than you thought. Everybody who sees them says that. Sure, they were the tallest structures on the earth for thousands of years, but compared to modern buildings, they don't seem so impressive. They've been stripped of the white casing stones and golden capstones that made them really cool in ancient times. (The *Throne of Fire* 323-324)

Carter's teenaged boredom with the physicality of the Egyptian pyramids dismantles the awe associated with them, rejecting nostalgic power. The Memphis Pyramid makes an appropriate proxy because it is both a pyramidal structure that obviously appropriates Ancient Egypt for entertainment value, but it is also an abandoned sports arena, left to the ravages of time much like the ancient pyramids before it. However, rather than making it a "chthonic space" (of Carroll's lapsed topos), Riordan gives the abandoned Tennessee pyramid new life. Where, typically, "[d]amaged, submerged and even subterranean spaces allow characters to reach out towards and to engage with the past (Carroll 134), Riordan applies a similar engagement with a modern structure with modern furnishings. Rather than romanticizing a crumbling edifice because of the nostalgic preference for the ancient, Riordan removes age from the equation, focusing on the power of the shape. Carter appreciates America's new modern glass and steel structure that captures the lost shine of its ancient counterparts. The white casing stones that made the originals "cool" would have made the ancient pyramids gleam, similar to the glass of the current Tennessee pyramid. Carter doesn't dismiss the original pyramids completely or ignorantly (his encyclopedic knowledge of Ancient Egyptian archaeology is expressed

time and time again throughout the series). But Riordan privileges the modern teen's perspective as able to look past nostalgic impulse. With his odd educational background and expertise, Carter understands the ancient pyramids, but his youth allows him to look at newer forms and appreciate the recreations as equally valid. In his brattish rejection of traditional wisdom (born of boredom from having to accompany his father on so many archaeological digs), Carter is able to see what Thoth sees: the age of Ancient Egyptian forms matters little when it comes to human (and godly) intention. This realization can extend to the protagonists themselves. Carter and Sadie, as teens, have power and agency that many of their older counterparts in the House of Life do not; their age matters little when they can seize the knowledge required to save the world.

Unlike the artifacts and landscapes in previous children's fantasy, not all of these spaces have to be several millennia or centuries old to participate in ancient mythology. They don't have to be part of a privileged European or Classical history to function within fantasy. This strategy of integration allows Riordan, instead, to privilege the much newer America in a genre that has often depended upon historical landscapes. Placing Khonsu in the Luxor casino and Thoth in the Memphis Pyramid turns the anachronisms on their heads. Nostalgia to recapture the past is unneeded when an Ancient Egyptian god inhabiting this version of a pyramid reclaims its authenticity. On one hand, it allows America—or, at least, an ideological construct of America as a monolithic whole—to appropriate and participate in ancient mythology, but, on the other, it points out the nostalgic tendencies at work in any fantasy landscape. *The Kane Chronicles'* equation of modern structures with ancient ones speaks self-reflexively to the many layers of the

palimpsest, acknowledging the layers of appropriation—particularly nineteenth century Egyptomania—that so colour these anachronistic reproductions.

The Kane Chronicles' American landmarks, like the Washington Monument, the Luxor Hotel and Casino, the Memphis Pyramid, and Graceland, appeal to the power of Ancient Egyptian mythos and the layers of often conflicted meaning that America has accumulated within its long relationship with the symbolism of Ancient Egypt. This substitution of anachronistic reproductions for ancient spaces shows a new frontier for thinking about how landscape and history work within fantasies for children. These landmarks, with their Ancient Egyptian forms, primarily (and often uncritically) appeal to the America as a powerful, enduring nation: the natural descendant of the Ancient Egyptian civilization, it is, as Abraham Lincoln called it, "the great Egypt of the west" (Lincoln).

Chapter 3

Mapping 'Un-London':
Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart* Trilogy and the Rejection of Nostalgic Landscapes

"Mind the gap!"
—Neil Gaiman, *Neverwhere*

The Thames flows widening towards the city it has created; the coastline of Britain encloses me within a shape as familiar as the constellations of the stars, and as consciously felt as the enclosing walls of this garden. […] I know of no philosophy that can disprove that this land, having achieved this moment, was not always bound to achieve it, or that I, because I exist, was not always inevitably coming into existence.
—Jacquetta Hawkes, *A Land*

When George Chapman, the main child protagonist of Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart* trilogy, angrily storms out of a class trip at the Natural History Museum and punches the head of a small carved dragon on the building's ornate façade, he gets much more than his expectations of a dressing down by his teacher and teasing by the school bullies. Expecting to find his hand broken, George knows he's taken his anger too far, but he looks down and sees "No bone. No blood even. Just wet from the rain. He couldn't believe it. He looked at it. Something had changed. … Unless he was going mad, it [the carving] had been looking at him. Now its eyes were closed" (*Stoneheart* 16). George decides that "it must have been a trick of the light," but, in that moment, with a "wet scrape and a dry squeal" (16), a stone pterodactyl peels itself from the façade and starts hunting him. George doesn't know it yet, but he is in 'Un-London,' a layer of London where statues are alive, and he is in immediate danger. He starts to run: "It scraped over the roofs of taxis, and the drivers didn't stop talking for an instant. No one in the bus looked round, no one registered that this prehistoric nightmare of bones and teeth was

stalking a child through the most crowded thoroughfare in London" (27). George is immediately and viscerally confronted with Un-London; however, he also remains in the modern urban London landscape. As he weaves between the traffic and crowds, he realizes no one is going to help him because others can't see the statues move: "People say you're never as alone as when you're in a crowd, but being alone in a crowd when something's hunting you down and the crowd can't see it is a lot worse" (27).[1] George's realization makes the contiguity of the fantasy clear: the rest of the London is moving along as always, and George is the only one who can see the terror pursuing him. He soon discovers that all of London's statues are live, sentient beings subject only to the will of their "maker" and to the Darkness emanating from the London Stone that threatens the city.[2] George must simultaneously negotiate the landscape of the London he's always known and the living statues of Un-London; fortunately for him, menacing pterodactyls are not the only statues in London. As his terror-stricken flight takes him into Hyde Park Corner, a World War One statue named the Gunner steps from his plinth at the Royal Artillery Memorial and obliterates the stone beast.

As this sequence from the opening chapters demonstrates, the *Stoneheart* trilogy (*Stoneheart*, *Ironhand*, and *Silvertongue*, 2005-2008) rejects many of the impulses of

[1] Besides the universal sentiment, this moment alludes to the invisibility George feels as a lonely child with a dead father and a neglectful actress mother and also foreshadows his realization that no one else can peer into this layer of Un-London to see the statues moving. Like many contiguous fantasies, *Stoneheart* offers reasoning as to why only certain people can see the fantasy elements around them. When George asks why a man cannot see the statues move, the statue character called the Gunner explains, "'Because he's a normal rational bloke—apart from driving a German car—and normal rational people don't believe you can walk round London with statues. Stands to reason. It's impossible. So his mind won't believe his eyes. It's a protection thing'" (*Stoneheart* 63). This explanation is similar to the explanations of the Mist/Duat in Riordan's work which clouds mortals and non-magicians' visions from seeing magic.

[2] The London Stone, housed in an unassuming grated niche in Cannon Street, is an object of much myth and mystery. The London Stone has been said to be the altar of Brutus and the stone where Jack Cade struck his sword. In *Stoneheart* it houses a dark and ravenous power.

earlier children's fantasies. Rather than travelling to a traditional fantasy landscape in an Otherworld or bounded a pastoral setting, the child protagonists in *Stoneheart* must negotiate the center of modern London and all of the countless layers of its palimpsest. Through its many living statues, Fletcher's text encompasses multiple competing strata of history, anchoring them all in the London's built environment. Since Un-London is not a separate place but a layer of reality that exists in tandem with consensus reality, *Stoneheart* manifests London's deep palimpsest in a dynamic way: its walking and talking statues are a realization of the city's many histories. George learns that his layer of London is "only one London. One of many. And what [he] see[s] as London? Merely another's un-London. More things in heaven and earth, Horatio. Yes, indeed. And more heavens and earths. More hells too" (*Stoneheart* 345). Re-evaluating the monolithic construction of history that he may have studied in school, George learns that London is a fluctuating zone of multiple perspectives. *Stoneheart* emphasizes these multiple perspectives by focusing on statues, like the Gunner, that exist on the periphery of London's traditional representation of history.

The city's statues are drawn from a host of time periods and styles, representing the sheer depth of London's palimpsest where "[a]ll pasts are all still there, layered under the skin" (*Stoneheart* 159), but Fletcher's text privileges particular statues, and what they have in common is rejection of an easy relationship with nostalgia. *Stoneheart*'s living statues reflect a perspective on fantasy that plays with the boundaries of the fantastical; the text achieves this flirtation between the shifting lines of fantasy and reality by using London's built environment to assert unexpected realist elements, revealing a dynamic

and shifting geography that rewrites tradition within a city already steeped in layers of myth and legend.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that *Stoneheart* rejects what Svetlana Boym calls "restorative nostalgia"; instead, the trilogy fosters in its protagonists—and, by extension, its readers—a critical awareness of the myths and history surrounding them in the city and the nation. I argue that Fletcher's exploration of London's deep palimpsest depends more upon the critical excavation of many strata of memory and myth than on a uniform nostalgic version of the city and its many histories. This effect is achieved through Fletcher's strategic mobilization of landscape that rejects traditional constructions of space for children. Fletcher's London setting, I demonstrate, is a departure from traditional children's fantasies that tend to whisk child protagonists away from urban landscapes (and from London, in particular). Moreover, Fletcher further reinforces his choice of urban landscapes by purposefully rejecting child-friendly spaces; instead, he focuses on public spaces where the child must confront the city; by doing so, he claims the whole city as, if not always a child-friendly space, a space that nevertheless belongs to children.

The public statues that become Fletcher's characters determine the trilogy's landscapes, and Fletcher's Gunner character is particularly representative of *Stoneheart's* wary relationship with nostalgia. Despite its many statues from public national memorials that are typically associated with conservative historical narrative, *Stoneheart* doesn't offer a notion of heritage defined by Thatcherism or patriotic fervor that "characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in antimodern myth-making by means of a return to national symbols and myths" (Boym 41). Boym explains

that "Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past" (41); however, *Stoneheart* is not interested in a totalizing exhumation of a singular national myth as an excuse for nostalgia. Instead, it falls into Boym's category of reflective nostalgia, which, she says, "lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and time" (41), but this lingering and these dreams, much like a contiguous fantasy that does not separate the child protagonist from reality but offers two layers at once, does not lose sight of the present. It can be a dual reading, a critical examination of the past that allows for an understanding of the present. The reflective nostalgic, explains Boym, "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity" (xviii). Rather than presenting the past from a single angle, *Stoneheart* invites the protagonists and readers to examine the past from a variety of perspectives, but instead of the reconstruction of a lost past, reflective nostalgia can present readers and child protagonists with "an ethical and creative challenge, not merely a pretext for midnight melancholias" (xviii). *Stoneheart* offers this "ethical and creative challenge" (xviii) when, instead of placing the full focus on statues that represent soldiers and leaders in allegorical or triumphal modes, the trilogy emphasizes the difference between those statues and the Gunner, the main adult voice in the novels and a realist statue from Charles Sargeant Jagger's Royal Artillery Memorial (see figure 1). By looking closely at the memorial, I argue that Jagger's artistic innovations and realist style inform Fletcher's approach to London: The Gunner represents stark realism that rejects traditional forms of

memorialization and nostalgia and subverts the nation's *nostos* as "a place of sacrifice and glory, of past suffering" that, "in the national ideology," is "transformed into a collective belonging that relies on past sufferings that transcend individual memories" (Boym 15). By focusing on the brutal experience of the individual, Jagger's work undermines traditional forms of monumentalization that subsume the individual to the national cause. Both Jagger and Fletcher insist upon representing the Gunner as a soldier who has endured a horrific war as opposed to a figure that celebrates propagandistic pageantry and glosses over the hardships of combat. He is an unnamed

Fig. 1 The Royal Artillery Memorial, Hyde Park Corner, London, from Heather Cyr; 23 June 2015.

soldier in a city full of statues with titles and crowns and clearly defined person identities, and therefore represents *Stoneheart*'s overall rejection of traditional notions of nostalgia that avoid the hard realities of conflict (and life) and gives its child protagonists a nuanced view of the historical palimpsest. I argue that the urban landscape of the contiguous fantasy, the focus on soldier statues—in particular the inspiration of Jagger's realist stylistic techniques—and the way that the child protagonists interact with this landscape all add up to a complex strategy of realism within the fantasy.

3.1: Spaces for children

While fleeing from the malevolent statues with the help of the Gunner, George meets Edie Laemmel, a young girl who can also see the statues move. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that George and Edie must fulfill a quest to place the small dragon head—the chunk of stone statue that George broke from the façade of the Natural History Museum—on the London Stone in Cannon Street as a sort of offering to the past. George, like his deceased father, is a "maker," and artistic magic flows through his hands: "All things that have been made feel [his] power and the affront it has caused." Now George must make amends for "br[eaking] an ancient bond by using making hands to mar" (*Stoneheart* 300). With this emphasis on the power of the maker, the text sets up expectations regarding the Gunner's maker, Charles Sargeant Jagger, whose work I'll examine a bit further on. If George doesn't fulfill his task, he will never fully return to his layer of London, and the war between the statues that started when the Gunner broke a truce to save George from the pterodactyl will rage on. George reluctantly teams up with Edie, a fiery runaway with a mysterious and terrible power; she is a *glint*, someone who

can see the history of an object when she touches it: "Bad things that happen leave a mark on their surroundings. Good things, too. But people respond more strongly to bad. And glints, when they touch stones that have a mark in them, channel it. The past plays through them again" (*Stoneheart* 110).[3] When George first witnesses Edie's glinting, he's shocked: "Edie screamed. Her back arched, her eyes screwed shut, her mouth opened wide, her tendons snapped tight as violin strings, and sound that wasn't just a sound ripped through George's head" (102). Unlike the man in Boym's anecdote that I recounted in the introduction whose face was burned by the polluted waters of the Pergoyla River, Edie knows that the past can be terribly painful.

Together, George and Edie work to find out how to break the curse that George unleashed and the mysteries behind Edie's dreadful gift. Along the way, they meet a host of human statues, or "spits," like the Gunner: the bumbling and kind Mr. Dictionary; the statue of Samuel Johnson in the Strand; the fierce and protective Queen Boadicea in her chariot, whose plinth overlooks Westminster; and the wily Black Friar, who adorns a pub of the same name on Queen Victoria Street in Blackfriars. They also meet a number of malevolent non-human statues, or "taints" (like the pterodactyl from the Natural History Museum in the opening scene), who are in thrall to the London Stone, including the Gridman, a postmodern statue from High Holborn; Spout, a cat-like gargoyle from St. Pancras; and the Temple Bar Dragon on Fleet Street who guards the entrance to the City. *Stoneheart* forces its two child protagonists—one who must wrestle with the power of

[3] In his trilogy marketed to adults called *The Oversight*, Fletcher returns to the idea of glinting, making two of his main characters glints. This novel further explains the pain and isolation of being one of these 'gifted' women: "It does not feel like a gift. It feels like a curse. It feels like a dream but I am awake. And then I feel sick […]. Sometimes I do vomit. People say I am having a fit because I scream" (*The Oversight* 61). In both trilogies, the terrible gift of glinting leads people to become suspicious and hostile towards glints. This explains the Gunner's reluctance, at first, to be near Edie: "Glints is dangerous. Glints is trouble. Glints is so much bleeding trouble that they attracts more trouble" (Stoneheart 68-9).

creation through his mantle of "maker," and one whose unique power forces her to experience painful shards of the past—to engage with the tactile evidence of the past and the myriad tangible and intangible traces that the past leaves behind, particularly in an ancient urban space like London. Rather than re-enacting one mythological arc, the children must read the many often confusing and misleading layers of the past. The large array of living statues they encounter in Un-London further emphasizes this focus on the past as a layered and complex "synchronous mesh of instances, [where] the landscape is not a two-dimensional unit, but rather a kind of thick palimpsest where time and space are correlated" (Carroll 141). And London itself, with its literal layers of archaeological history within its streets and metaphorical layers of myth and story within the West's cultural imagination, presents a potent palimpsest to reckon with.

While much of children's literature traditionally presents London as a place from which children must quickly escape to begin their adventures, Fletcher places his child protagonists within the heart of London. George and Edie's adventures take place within and around the boundaries of the City, the traditional square mile of London that served as its boundaries from the time of Roman settlement in the 1st century CE through the Middle Ages.[4] It is guarded at these boundaries by iron dragons, the most fanciful of which is the Temple Bar Dragon who stands where the Temple Bar gate once stood to regulate trade in and out of the city with Westminster (see figure 2). As Sebastian Groes suggests in his introduction to *The Making of London*, "Throughout history the city acts as a memory map containing traces of power which are inscribed on its material formation. The geographical and architectural codification of power in the cityscape

[4] The City is 1.12 square miles.

constitutes a discourse that has been read, analyzed and responded to by London writers, who are particularly adept at this" (Groes 2). However, that discourse that has been so fruitfully plumbed by London writers has not always integrated children into this cityscape or allowed them to take part in the analysis of its many codes. In "Treasure Seekers in the City: London in the Novels of E. Nesbit," Jenny Bavidge suggests, "The history of the representation of London's children veers between sanctification and demonization, right up until the present day with our paranoia about the safety of children in the city, and an accompanying terror of antisocial and criminal children" (46). By

Fig. 2 Temple Bar Dragon, Fleet Street, London, from Heather Cyr; 2 July 2014.

placing George and Edie in the heart of London's layers—gleaming office towers jostling with the architectural remnants of centuries past—*Stoneheart* rejects deep-seated notions

of which settings are appropriate for children and invites its child protagonists to analyze its material geography.

In "Stories in Space: The Geographies of Children's Literature" Bavidge argues for the inclusion of literature for children in the study of children's geographies, pointing out that literary texts have had a strong influence on the way children are invented in the popular imagination and vice versa. Her focus is on how childhood is tied to idyllic imaginings of rural spaces and figured as at odds with simplistic conceptions of the dangers of the urban spaces. She says, "Children are largely excluded from accounts of the city, either literary or theoretical, and when they are present their roles are strongly circumscribed, especially given the powerful cultural association of childhood with the rural and natural" (323). Rather than circumscribing their roles or territory, *Stoneheart*'s quests force Edie and George to range throughout the City, facing its dangers and discovering its secrets, but also confronting its banality: "They paused on the steps and looked at the bustling city splashing past in front of them. The relative emptiness of the night streets had been replaced by throngs of pedestrians, […] unavailable taxis now inched forward in a rain-lashed gridlock" (*Stoneheart* 363). Within this warren of "grey concrete and reddy-brown bricks" (437), they are forced to deal with the reality and magnitude of the cityscape: "This is London. Lot of life, lot of death, lot of everything" (127).

Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors and readers alike considered fantasy to be the territory of children, and London represented the exact opposite: adulthood and reality.[5] The notion of 'escape' that accompanies a fantastic

[5] While fairy and folk tales (like those of Robert Samber, Benjamin Tabart, and Andrew Lang) were considered acceptable reading for children, this is not to say that the fantastic was wholly acceptable to

journey was, for more than a century, generally synonymous with escape into a pastoral world. Edith Nesbit's narrator in *Five Children and It* (1902) expresses this prevailing view:

> For London is like prison for children, especially if their relations are not rich. […] and London has none of those nice things that children may play with without hurting the things or themselves—such as trees and sand and woods and waters. And nearly everything in London is the wrong sort of shape—all straight lines and flat streets, instead of being all sorts of odd shapes, like things are in the country. (Nesbit 2-3)

The later books in Nesbit's series that bring her characters into London, so there is a certain characteristic biting irony in Nesbit's narrator's stance against London's "straight lines and flat streets" (3), but her narrator's pique humorously reflects traditional British children's literature which shows an unfettered preference for rural landscapes: a journey—preferably by train—into the country and/or falling into a pastoral otherworld through a portal are tropes in much of children's literature.[6] Many of the genre's most

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Bowdlerizers. In *Children's Fantasy Literature*, Michael Levy and Sarah Mendelsohn point out that, however much the fairy tales were made acceptable for the nursery, debates on the appropriateness of certain stories for children in the late 18th and 19th century shaped fantastic stories "to make the parents of child readers less nervous. Thus nineteenth-century folk and fairy tale collections for children were written in somewhat simpler language and with less emphasis on romance and abstractions, while at the same time reflecting the middle-class morality of their day" (23). George and Edie's broken families and the pure fantastical delights and horrors of 'Un-London' (let alone the children's agency within the cityscape) are a stark contrast to this style.

[6] While Nesbit wrestles with social issues of the time in *The Story of the Amulet*, the children in the story are at a narrative distance from the reader created by the dryly witty adult narrator who gives little time and detail to the interiority of the characters. Their humorously enacted innocent ramblings through ancient history have neither the life-threatening stakes nor the intimacy and agency that the third-person limited narration in *Stoneheart* creates. Unlike Nesbit's child protagonists, whose bumbling and wide-eyed naiveté nonetheless charms the enemy and wins the day, George and Edie must display savvy, loyalty, and a propensity for dual reading (not every statue is either truthful or good-natured, but they each give the children clues which they must sort through to make their own decisions). The most poignant example of George's agency, in particular, is when he chooses the "Hard Way" rather than simply replacing the dragon head and safely returning to his life. A major difference is that George and Edie both come to the narrative

famous child protagonists are whisked away from London and into a pastoral setting. While the children in Nesbit's *Five Children and It* head to the "Earthly Paradise" of a white house in the country, Peter and Wendy fly away to Neverland, the Pevensies board a train to the countryside, Susan Cooper's Drew children leave London for adventures in Cornwall and Wales, and, even in the contemporary milieu, Harry Potter boards the Hogwarts Express at Platform 9¾. All of these canonical child protagonists leave London for landscapes traditionally linked with children: pastoral and often pseudo-medieval spaces steeped in nostalgia. Bavidge agrees that "Literature for children promotes a nostalgic and, often, implicitly anti-urban world view via the places of canonically 'classic' children's literature such as Pook's Hill, the Shire, River Bank, Sunnybrooke Farm or Ransome's Lake District" (324). Because literature for children lingered over Rousseau's link between the Romantic child (and his or her later incarnation in the Edwardian Cult of Childhood) and the "natural" world, cities (London, in particular) were rarely represented in fantasies for children until the last few years as anything but places requiring escape. As the ultimate geographical expressions of society's institutions, modern cities are anathema to the Romantic child in tune with nature; consequently, they were—and in large part, still are—considered inappropriate settings for children and their literary counterparts.[7]

Critics have examined this pervasive urban/rural binary in the relationship

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with deeply troubling issues (for George, his father's death, and, for Edie, an abusive step-father); they start the story as wary individuals rather than coddled children.

[7] Rousseau had a particular disdain for capital cities—urban symbols of nationhood—as an expansive representation of the institutions that "imprison" children. In his argument for the wholesomeness of natural landscapes for children, Rousseau declared, "Human flesh and blood are always cheapest in the capital cities" (*Émile*, Gutenberg). His exhortations to mothers that their children should be educated by nature and all the many literary, artistic and, yes, "institutional" expressions of this sentiment have lingered in our collective idealization of childhood and, in particular, our literary creations for children.

between children and landscape in literary, popular, social, and political discourse. In "Childhood, the Urban and Romanticism," geographer Owain Jones examines a number of British social geographical studies on the current "great anxiety about the fate of childhood" (17), arguing that, when it comes to children, the West's symbolic constructions of 'urban' and 'rural' are intensely entrenched, deeply problematic, and in need of reevaluation within several disciplines, including his own. The studies he considers show that British adults are likely to consider the rural landscape as the only place for "real" childhood experiences, and he highlights particular examples of the symbolic relationship between 'nature,' 'innocence' and rural locations as well as "how the urban is seen to deny these essential ingredients of childhood" (19). Elsewhere he notes that "notions of both country and childhood are massively and intricately present within our culture(s). Where they intersect in ideas of 'country childhoods' they often become a vision of considerable potency, bearing a heavy burden of yearning from within the contexts of (adult) modernity" ("Little Figures" 152). Literary critics point to similar formulas. Sandra Dinter writes about *Tom's Secret Garden*, an example of this impulse to move children into a 'natural' world: "Drawing on Romanticism's claim for an instinctive bond between children and nature, [Philippa] Pearce's text presents urbanity as an unsuitable environment for children because it alienates the child from what the Romantic imagination constructs as its natural habitat" (Dinter 223). Susan E. Honeyman picks up on this critique in "Childhood Bound: In Gardens, Maps and Pictures." She suggests that, much like the adults in Jones's surveys who believe children should live in a pastoral setting to ensure they have a 'wholesome' childhood, adult authors like Pearce place fictional children in bounded pastoral spaces for "their own nostalgic indulgence"

(117). Jones quotes Hunt who remarks on "common elements in what the adult sees as the essential children's book...a potent mixture of nostalgia (often in the form of a *rural* or suburban *arcadia*)" (xi). Many of these ideas about how the child is constructed in literature can be usefully traced to Jacqueline Rose's seminal *The Case of Peter Pan: or, The Impossibility for Children's Fiction*, as Bavidge does in her work on children in landscape: "Children's Literature and children's literary criticism necessarily and compulsively constructs the 'child', in accordance with the wider cultural construction and production of ideas and images of childhood and child-ness" (322). Just as the child is constructed, so the spaces for them are equally constructed.

Children's literature that does take place in cities often removes children to child-friendly spaces—pockets of the pastoral world like gardens, parks and wooded areas within the city limits. As Honeyman says, "Most friendly childhood spaces draw from and continue the pastoral tradition of modernity; which idealizes and romanticizes the wild (ironically) as a safe retreat for those weary of civilized constraints" (Honeyman 117). In his work, Jones traces these attitudes to an anachronistic Romantic conception of children and childhood, yet, interestingly, he calls upon the Romantics' obsession with ruins to suggest that the liminal and empty spaces of cities should be re-imagined as play places for children, an idea that would require a reordering of the West's overall reluctance to allow "symbolic compatibility" between its conceptions of 'childhood' and 'urban' (17).[8] Overall, he argues, "Part of this fear may be about children's unchaperoned

[8] Recent authors have picked up on the intriguing idea of liminal urban spaces as venues for the exploration of children's and YA fantasy. Michael Scott's *Alchemyst* series (2007-2012), which I discussed briefly in Chapter 2, uses a London junkyard as a major setting in the third book in his series, and Tom Pollock's *The Skyscraper Throne* (2012-2014) series uses the refuse, train tracks and construction zones of the city to create a hidden world of characters. The impulse to place both children and contiguous fantasy within the hidden and rejected spaces of cities speaks to the liminal nature of both fantasy and childhood; both are

presence in the ordered urban landscape. There is a need to re-conceptualize both the nature of childhood and the nature of the urban in order to make children's use of urban space less symbolically suspect" (27). One of the places where that reconceptualization can—and, indeed, should begin—is within children's literature, in particular children's fantasies, where landscape is so central to the story. This is exactly the direction Bavidge moves in when she identifies five categories for how literary works depict children and children's spaces in cities: "nostalgic, transformative, generic, realist and irrational" (324).

While Bavidge is dealing with all kinds of children's books, from picture books to young adult novels (and not fantasies alone), her 'nostalgic' category is particularly useful here. This category is concerned with how the city is often represented for children and how that is reflected back within "its official integration into the material geography of the city itself"; she gives the examples of how "the statues of Paddington Bear and Peter Pan and the recently erected signpost to Platform 9 3/4 at King's Cross in London, or the memorial garden for Frances Hodgson Burnett in Central Park, all establish a geographical correlative to the children's canon" (324). This reification of nostalgic childhood within public urban spaces also helps define how the city's relationship with children is marketed and defined:

> When they do depart from the pastoral scene, the defining images of the city appropriated by the wider culture from children's literature and identified as 'classic', have reflected this blue plaque theme. A kind of 'landmark literature' offers a similarly comforting and nostalgic view of the metropolis as the pastoral

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fleeting concepts that must be somehow shielded from the bright glare of reality, but, in these fictions, both can enjoy freedom in the spaces in between.

> classics: Christopher Robin forever down at the Palace, Mary Poppins descending into Cherry Tree Lane, Pongo and Missis taking in the Twilight Barking or the theatre-land romance of *Ballet Shoes*. (325)

As Boym explains, "At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for place" like those recounted by Bavidge; however, our obsession with this 'landmark literature' is "actually […] a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (Boym xv). Although *Stoneheart*'s statues are inextricable from ideas of memorialization, the books steer away from this sort of carefully ordered and socially sanctioned "blue plaque" veneration of the past in both its choice of statues and the spaces in which the text places the children.[9] It is precisely the rejection of this kind of un-critical nostalgia (Boym's "restorative" nostalgia), that is at the heart of *Stoneheart* where London—particularly the City, the very heart of London—is the ultimate metonym for the complex palimpsests of urban landscapes.

Stoneheart starts at the Natural History Museum, a space that has been specifically ordered for the inclusion of children, but George, bullied by his schoolmates and feeling isolated by his father's recent death, feels neither welcome nor safe. He quickly leaves the ostensibly child-friendly space of the museum (circumscribed by his class group on an ordered expedition), and once he is pulled into Un-London, the spaces become distinctly unlinked from childhood. During his chase with the living pterodactyl statue, he meets the Gunner at The Royal Artillery Memorial, a place that the *Stoneheart*

[9] An example of how Fletcher flips the script on this urban/pastoral divide can be found in its two child protagonists. Edie comes from the seaside, a favourite place of childhood memories and nostalgia, but the beach of her childhood was made of hard shale, a piece of which she uses to fend off and accidently kill her drunken stepfather. George is from the city, but, while he also feels neglected by his forgetful mother after his father's death, he lives in a posh London flat. Between these two characters, the child from the country is wiser and more street-wise than the urban child.

novels return to again and again (statues gather and regroup there as they strategize about how they will face the threat of the taints and the Darkness that is controlling them). The memorial is at the apex of Hyde Park Corner, a small park that serves as a convergence point between two of London's largest green spaces, Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens and the block of green space that includes Buckingham Palace, Green and St. James's Parks. Garden and park spaces often circumscribe boundaries for children: as Dinter explains, "[i]n literature, the garden's status as such a regulatory regime is often concealed by its alleged naturalness" (Dinter 219). However, unlike the relatively tranquil atmosphere of the parks it sits between, Hyde Park Corner is not a peaceful park or garden. It is a traffic island, the place where several major thoroughfares merge, and "the busiest junction in London, a sea of traffic grinding around a roundabout full of thick monuments and thin grass" (*Stoneheart* 26). Neither walls nor greenery shut out the urban space around it (unlike the gardens and parks found in much of children's literature). With its towering monuments, quickly moving traffic, thick crowds of commuters on bicycles and foot, and lack of vegetation, there is nothing Edenic about Hyde Park Corner.

Stoneheart goes out of its way to reject the more traditional garden spaces typical of the "'landmark literature' [that] offers a similarly comforting and nostalgic view of the metropolis as the pastoral classics" (Bavidge 325). The text's outright rejection of the familiar children's statues, particularly the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens, is a signal that George and Edie will not journey into any of these well-known child-friendly London spaces. In a notable episode at the Royal Artillery Memorial, Ariel, the somewhat mercurial flying sprite statue from the top of the Bank of England, draws attention to the absence of one famous statue made specifically for children: "There is a

boy who lives over there, a babyish boy in a babyish park who thinks he too can fly. […] He is an odious coxcomb of a boy. And he flies with all the grace of a thrown turnip" (*Ironhand* 121). Peter Pan is neither mentioned here by name nor is his statue a character in the trilogy. While Ariel is certainly immature (and more than somewhat spiteful) in her description of the "babyish" Kensington Gardens, her prideful boasts draw attention to Fletcher's strategy of choosing both statues and landscapes that are unexpected in the context of children's fantasy. Rather than focusing on a statue specifically *for* children in Kensington Gardens, Fletcher's novel focuses on statues like Ariel and Bow Boy (Anteros from Piccadilly Circus). [10] Both of these statues can fly, like Peter Pan, but each represents the "adult" spaces of London: the massive, imposing National Bank and the blaring lights of Piccadilly. [11] Unlike Kensington Gardens with its bounded and curated "natural" spaces for children, the National Bank and Piccadilly are distinctly un-childlike and distinctly urban spaces.[12] By highlighting statues like Ariel and Bow Boy—as opposed to Peter Pan or Paddington Bear[13]—who dwell in these metropolitan, adult spaces of London and have no connection with the postcard nostalgia of a 'child's

[10] As Andelys Wood points out, by making clear Bow Boy is a statue of Anteros, Fletcher rewrites what is generally assumed about the Bow Boy, often thought to be Eros or Cupid: "Cupid is the god of the loved. Anteros is god of people whose love is not returned. He is the god of the unloved" (*Silvertongue* 93).
[11] Other than the tempestuous Ariel and the well-meaning Bow Boy, who sacrifices himself to warn the other spits from the danger of a flock of flying taints, the only other childlike statue in Fletcher's books is Little Tragedy, a statue of a nymph holding a tragedy mask from the inside of the Black Friar Pub on Queen Victoria Street. Little Tragedy is part of the Art Nouveau decorations created in 1905 by Arts and Crafts Movement artist Henry Poole. Little Tragedy is a sadly tragic figure, in one moment showing childlike innocence and longing for George to be his friend, and, in another moment, acting darkly impish and betraying Edie's trust in his childish demeanor.
[12] For more about the garden in Edwardian children's literature see Jane Darcy's "The Edwardian Child in the Garden: Childhood in the Fiction of Frances Hodgson Burnett" in *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction* (Adrienne Gavin and Andrew Humphries, eds.).
[13] Of Paddington Station's several notable statues, which include Paddington Bear as well as the memorial for the Kindertransport (also associated, if more darkly, with children), *Stoneheart,* tellingly*,* only mentions one: the Railway Man, one of Jagger's World War One figures.

London,' Fletcher makes a case for the appropriateness and appropriation of London's palimpsestic depths for children.

3.2: Mapping the city with statues

From mythological creatures and famous generals to literary figures and kings and queens, London's abundant statuary offers virtually limitless opportunities to tap into the city's past through these markers in its landscape. Fletcher takes advantage of this treasure trove by integrating many different types of statues into his narrative. London's earth, stones, architecture and streets form its geographical palimpsest—its landscape is overwritten with London's many chronological and mythological pasts—and its statues form a tangible map of this palimpsest. Built at different times and in different styles, London's many statues offer physical markers of the different eras, people, accomplishments, and tragedies that make up the city's history: "London is not only the fruitful setting, subject matter and producer of fictions, but its myths and fictions are implicated in shaping our understanding of the city. Therefore the material structure of rationally calculable and quantifiable objects, actions and people takes no priority over that imagined city; its literature generates its own peculiar knowledge" (Groes 1). Just as *Stoneheart* does not rely on child-friendly spaces or statues that represent an ideal for children, Fletcher doesn't consistently reach for the most obvious strata of the geographical palimpsest: the medieval, the Celtic, and the rural/ pastoral layers so often associated with the stories of children's fantasy genre in Britain. In *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz suggest these layers depend on an over-used form of nostalgia, arguing that the reliance on pseudo-medieval worlds in children's

fantasy "suggests a regressive element, a romantic yearning (by adults) for earlier 'innocence', for an alternative world where motivations, actions, needs, and gratifications are simpler and more direct than in the desperately complex and subtle real world" (Hunt and Lenz 4). Instead, *Stoneheart*'s relationship with history differentiates its narrative from these traditional fantasy settings in several important ways including its urban setting, which firmly locates it outside of the much-vaunted "high fantasy" category. Also, instead of choosing one mythology and rewriting, for example, the path of an Arthurian hero—whether it be from a Celtic, Roman or chivalric perspective—*Stoneheart* excavates numerous layers at once. In *The Middle Ages in Children's Literature*, Clare Bradford describes the trilogy, along with Neil Gaiman's *Graveyard Book*, as a "multi-temporal fantasy" in which "traces of the Middle Ages mingle with medievalist and modern identities, buildings and monuments" (46). Within London's temporal and geographical landscape, *Stoneheart* draws on a mix of influences from various time periods, accessing various layers of the city's palimpsest at once. This disrupts the totalizing program of restorative nostalgia which longs for one stable representation of the past.

Many children's fantasies embrace a time period such as the medieval (or pseudo-medieval), the 18th-century, the Victorian or the Edwardian period. *Stoneheart* suggests that London is all of these. Many children's literature scholars read children's fantasies through a particular time period; there are numerous articles about the medieval nature of *Dark is Rising* or the Victorian conventions of *Harry Potter*, but this approach to the genre doesn't work quite the same way with *Stoneheart*. This observation is borne out in Bradford's examination of the ambiguous medieval aspects of the *Stoneheart* trilogy

"which adhere to fantasy conventions based on binary oppositions between good and evil, dark and light" (49). This Manichean aspect of George's struggle is foregrounded when he must work towards replacing the chunk of stone dragon carving on the London Stone despite the dangers of the enemy statues all around him: "The gargoyles' implacable hatred of humans is grounded in their alignment with the Darkness, whose primeval struggle with Light took place before the world came into existence" (Bradford 49). But what is different about *Stoneheart*'s manipulation of the Light versus Dark trope is the many shades of grey in between as represented by London's topography. Boym writes that restorative nostalgia's "conspiratorial worldview is based on a single transhistorical plot, a Manichean battle of good and evil and the inevitable scapegoating of a mythical enemy. Ambivalence, the complexity of history and the specificity of modern circumstances is thus erased, and modern history is seen as a fulfillment of ancient prophecy" (43). However, *Stoneheart*'s layers suggest that history is a much more complex animal than George's central quest and that even what is Dark and what is Light is up for interpretation. As Bradford suggests, "This conventional fantasy trope is spatialised in the trilogy's treatment of London, where Darkness lurks in the London Stone, having inhabited it since prehistoric times even as successive waves of humans occupying London have attributed various meanings to the Stone" (46). The layers of meaning in the stone—interpreted at various times as a Roman milestone, an object of Druidic worship, London's "palladium," the Stone of Brutus, the site of Jack Cade's rebellion, and the heart of *Stoneheart*'s Darkness—make it an apt metaphor for the trilogy's treatment of the city's palimpsestic depths: its many meanings, layered as they are, refuse to designate one period's temporality as primary to the text. These layers

refuse to "spatialize time"; instead, they speak to reflective nostalgia which "cherishes shattered fragments and temporalizes space" (49). Furthermore, the ambiguity of the stone does not privilege one reading of the stone-as-text over another. When George decides not to place the chunk of sculpture on the stone (and, instead, chooses the Hard Way), he turns his back on an easy return to his London which would have meant abandoning his friend: "Edie, what if the sphinxes gave me an answer that has two meanings? … The Stone Heart and the Stone at the Heart of London? What if they are two *different* things, instead of two ways of describing the same stone?" (476-477). With this lexical realization, George makes a choice: he refuses the easy way out as well as an easy reading of the stone (and the many mysteries of London that it represents), but this means that he must face "The Hard Way."

As a part of this new challenge, he must duel against the Last Knight of the Cnihtengild on land, air, and water, a set of actions that could be taken as evidence of a clear medievalism: a traditional fantasy plotline drawn from medieval romance.[14] But Bradford shows a discordance within any medieval reading of the books by pointing out

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[14] The Cnihtengild statue is composed of one large knight on horseback and resides in Cutlers Gardens in Devonshire Square. The oft-told story is that in the 10th century, King Edgar granted the land to 13 medieval knights, who were said to have completed tasks on land, on water, and underground in exchange for the grant. This story is most likely due to nineteenth-century romanticizing, since, as Frank Merry Stenton points out, the translation of *cnihtas* as "knight" is anachronistic. The probable reality of the Cnihtengild is less fantastical:

> The Old English word *cniht* meant a servant or a retainer, not a warrior […]. It is, on the whole, most probable that the original *cnihtas* of London were responsible servants of magnates owning property in London, appointed to supply their lords with goods coming to the London market, and that, in course of time, independent traders entering the association changed the character of its membership while enrolling themselves under its ancient name. But we only see the London cnihta gild in the very last years of its existence, when whatever its origin, it was a wealthy association of prominent London citizens. (Stenton 33)

While the area was also home to the Holy Trinity Priory in the 12th century, Stenton's explanation fits with the later character of the area when the East India Company set up warehouses here in the 18th century. Here, *Stoneheart* focuses on London's mythology, which makes sense in terms of the schema of Spits and Taints. The maker who created the Cnihtengild statue imbued it with this romanticized version of history, thereby crafting London's very topography out of its stories. The sculpture commemorating the knights was erected in 1990 (see "Cutlers Gardens" on *London Gardens Online*).

several conflicting representations of the medieval and medievalisms that appear to jar against one another. Medievalisms in fantasy tropes and the preference for "artisan-made medievalisms" (48) shown in the feral, mindless "mass-produced trash" (*Silvertongue* 216) of the silver city dragons versus the dangerous yet noble "intelligent purposefulness of the Temple Bar Dragon" (Bradford 48) [15] may, again, seem to point to a clear privileging of the medieval. [16] However, Bradford shows how the text makes these expectations uncertain in other ways: she points to the ambiguity in George's name, arguing that the novel "aligns George with the demotic and mercantile associations of his family name, Chapman, rather than the aristocratic associations of his given name" (47), as well as the ridiculous representation of Richard the Lionheart, one of the few medieval statue figures given voice in the trilogy.[17] She argues that the trilogy's representation of the medieval and medievalisms "jut[s] up awkwardly against their approach to the historical Middle Ages. Other pasts, notably World War One, are accorded a far higher degree of respect." Overall, she says, "the medieval is associated in the trilogy with stasis

[15] The Temple Bar Dragon, as Bradford points out, can be categorized as a "medievalism" rather than medieval. Erected in 1880 after the dismantling of Christopher Wren's gate, the Temple Bar Memorial stands on Fleet Street facing towards Westminster where the westernmost gate of the city once stood. Designed by Charles Bell Birch, the dragon sits atop a marker designed by Horace Jones (the Heritage List calls it a "griffin"; see "Temple Bar Memorial" in the listing for more information). *Stoneheart's* narrator says, "Its wiry body looked like that of a lion crossed with a muscular greyhound and then covered in scales like chainmail" (139). The dragon guards the boundary of the city, making clear its purpose as guardian to the City when it lets out a spout of flame that becomes "a sharp-edged flame sculpture of a gatehouse with three openings beneath it" (143). George faces the dragon and is left with a mark that the dragon purposefully etches into his hand with its terrifying claw: a maker's mark. His ostensible enemy marks him as a maker.

[16] In another clear medieval romance trope, George and Edie cannot get through the gates of the city, guarded as they are by dragon taints, so the Gunner tells them to follow the muddy banks of the Thames: "There ain't much can save you once a taint's got your number, but what's uncanny and evil's always hated two things: cold iron and running water. So your way ain't by land" (152). However, this medieval trope is also contaminated by the city's layers. By having Edie find a mirror as they wade along the Thames, Edie and George's muddy and dangerous path also evokes the 18th- and 19th-century mudlarks: people (often children) who made their living scavenging through the mud and waste to find saleable objects.

[17] Carlo Marochetti forged the Richard Couer de Lion statue in bronze in 1856. It sits in Old Palace Yard at the Palace of Westminster.

and rigidity" (Bradford 49). This suggests *Stoneheart*'s strategy is one that, by having landscape drive the story, rejects the impetus to rely on medievalisms within the motion of its fantasy, and, instead, focuses on the landscape as a palimpsest, where some layers are purposefully accorded more attention than others, a sharp challenge to traditional generic conventions.

The refiguring of history can be best illustrated by two statues, the Queen and Mr. Dictionary, who each represent a historical palimpsest that refuses to be flattened by nostalgia. Both of these statues offer testimony that speaks to London's status as a fluctuating zone of multiple perspectives, and both undermine a monolithic, hegemonic or nostalgic version of London. The Queen is the defiant Boadicea, part of "an impressive double equestrian statue" (*Ironhand* 54) situated on a plinth on Victoria Embankment (see figure 3).[18] The statue looks like an allegorical Victory: "[a] regal woman in a simple shift dress, flowing cloak and a small spiky crown [standing] in a chariot, her right hand holding a business-like spear, and the other hand languidly urging her two surging chargers forward" (54-55). But her "victory" is more complex than that of a triumphant and non-specific Victory statue. The Queen is both an insider and an outsider. She is the oldest "monarch" featured in statues within the city, the legendary leader of the Celtic Iceni tribe, and the terrifying queen who burned Roman Londinium to the ground to avenge the rape of her daughters by Roman soldiers: "They call me red because I swept down on this city in vengeance for the wrong done to my daughters, and when I and my

[18] Although there are several variants, I take my spelling of Boadicea's name from Fletcher who uses the same spelling as the first name in a title used for the Grade II heritage listing first entered in 1958: "Boadicea (Boudicca) Statuary Group". The statue's plinth on Westminster Pier also spells the Iceni leader's name as "Boadicea/ Boudicca" and includes a line from Thomas Cowper's "Boadicea, An Ode" (1782). While the historical Boadicea lived in the 1st century C.E., the sculpture of the Queen and her daughters was created by Thomas Thornycroft in the Beaux Arts Romantic style in the 1850s and was unveiled in 1902.

Fig. 3 Boadicea, Westminster Pier, London, from Heather Cyr; 21 June 2014.

army turned our backs on the smoking ruins and hied us homewards, my arms were red to the elbows with the blood of London …" (*Ironhand* 57-58); she's not necessarily a comforting figure, but her allegiance to Edie and George brings her fierceness to their cause. Her statue in Westminster is a reminder of the more turbulent parts of London's history, and, as a tribal leader who fought to destroy a colonizing imperial force, her statue is a more than somewhat incongruous symbol of the British nation (situated as it is looking towards the Houses of Parliament), yet she takes a leading role in the war against the Darkness throughout *Ironhand* and *Silvertongue*, arguing with other less competent statues, and taking precedence not because she is the most liked or mythologized but because she suffered for her land. In *Silvertongue*, the Darkness released from the stone freezes the city, and the friendly statues gather at Cleopatra's Needle to strategize. There, a rather foolish and snobbish Lionheart attempts to insert himself, but is quickly brought to heel by Boadicea: "Bar our way one moment longer and I shall take your sword and

thrash you with it until you bawl like the great baby you show yourself to be!" (*Silvertongue* 110). This scene forms part of Bradford's argument that the medieval, in the form of Lionheart, is less privileged than other layers of the palimpsest, but also shows the text privileging the least celebratory history of London in the form of this capable woman: its destruction. Rather, the Queen suggests that her knowledge of terror and sacrifice is what makes her the best leader, and she, as the statue that represents the most distant past, reminds us that there is nothing nostalgic about London's deep history. The Queen invites a respect for her trials and leadership but not a longing for a lost nation of tradition. Instead of insisting on London's importance because of imperialism or primogeniture, she suggests that London's less triumphant layers are essential to understanding its truth.

Lionheart is not the only medieval knight that the Queen puts in his place. When the Last Knight of the Cnihtengild accidently runs Ariel through with his lance, he sadly protests, "It was not meant," but the Queen confronts him and she and her daughters (who share her chariot) take the injured Ariel statue into their care: "'It never is,' she snorted. 'Go back to your Guild, Knight. And play your sword games with each other. That is all you are good for. We will take care of her from here and make sure she is on her plinth by turn o'day'" (*Ironhand* 211).[19] By sheer force of will, the Queen reduces the knights of legend to boys playing games, suggesting both that nostalgic veneration of knights is misguided and that she has insight into the workings of London's history and secrets that is more complex than traditionally accepted stories about brave knights and their secret pacts. In fact, Boadicea takes it upon herself—she "ALWAYS willed it so!"

[19] One of the few ways the statues are limited is that they must be on their plinth at midnight when even damaged statues will be healed; those statues who are not on their plinth will die and become unanimated.

(*Ironhand* 59)—to protect the less privileged, an often invisible layer of the historical palimpsest. Boadicea is particularly interested in Edie, declaring that glints are "strong girls and they live at a peril beyond bearing" (58) and that "*any* woman in peril is my charge and care" (59). After her run-in with the Last Knight of the Cnihtengild, she tells her daughters: "See, girls? It's as I always tell you: it never does to send a man to do a woman's job" (211). Boadicea's integral part in the story is that she challenges the presumed patriarchy of kingship and leadership and acknowledges the strength in Edie's painful struggles that are passed down through women over the generations; her presence asks for a re-reading of history and suggests there are a host of histories available that depart from a singular national vision.

In contrast to Boadicea's fierceness, Mr. Dictionary, the Samuel Johnson statue on Fleet Street (see figure 4), is not a heroic or martial statue. He's also not a figure who

Fig. 4 Mr. Dictionary, London, from Heather Cyr; June 22, 2015.

as a restorative force. Instead, Johnson's insistence that the English language must be particular—truthful—opposes the grand myth-making statements of helpers in fantasy that rely on restorative nostalgia's "two main plots—the return to origins and the conspiracy" (xviii). As Boym suggests, "reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores many ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones; it loves details not symbols" (xviii). When the Sphinxes on Victoria Embankment give George a riddle, he turns to Mr. Dictionary to help him unravel the details. Although George wants a straightforward answer, Mr. Dictionary's playful interrogation of language is just what he needs. As the Gunner tells him, "I got no idea where we can find a dictionary son, but I can do us one better. … I know where we can find the man what wrote one" (*Stoneheart* 115). The Samuel Johnson statue by Percy Hetherington Fitzgerald was installed in St. Clement Danes' churchyard in 1910 and faces Fleet Street as it meets the Strand just in front of the Royal Court of Justice where Temple Bar once stood.[20] He is "[a] statue of a man in an eighteenth-century dress …, a bird perched incongruously on top of a wig that in real life would have been powdered but now was peppered with pigeon-splat. […] [H]is face hung fleshy and lop-sided" (127). Also in the churchyard, at the west end, are two statues that commemorate World War Two RAF heroes as well as a statue of William Ewart Gladstone.[21] George mistakes the impressive statue of Gladstone ("a man in a long gown on top of a very elaborate plinth peer[ing] back down the strand as if expecting something distasteful to appear at any moment") for

[20] Johnson's statue is only three blocks from Gough Square where Dr. Johnson's House, now a museum where visitors can dress up as the Great Cham himself, still stands. In the courtyard of the square is a bronze statue of Johnson's cat, Hodge, sitting on a dictionary with several clam shells (Johnson is reputed to have went on a daily walk to procure clams for Hodge). Fletcher delightfully includes Hodge briefly in *Stoneheart* and gives him a larger role in his other series set in Un-London, *Dragon Shield*.
[21] See "St. Clement Danes Churchyard" on *London Gardens Online* for more information on the statues.

Johnson because "he looks like a professor" (126), but the Gunner disabuses him of that notion: "He's not distinguished. He's just a politician" (126). Again, *Stoneheart* plays with ideas of leadership and power, bringing together the Cockney soldier's dislike of politicians with George's naïve presumptions about who has useful knowledge. This is an important moment in George's education about nostalgia and experience. With Dictionary's "flattened vowels and blunt consonants of the Midlands" (127), George "couldn't help noticing that he sounded more like a farmer than a man who knew all about words and London" (128). But George learns that his expectations—the construction he has gleaned from culture of a stern man in robes superseding the less flatteringly portrayed Dictionary and the simple yearning for answers as opposed to the nuanced understanding of language—are not what will help him. Of course there is a wonderful type of nostalgic thrill at imagining seeking language advice from Samuel Johnson himself (or his statue avatar); *Stoneheart* is reconstructing and exhuming a beloved London figure after all, but episodes such as this reveal that "reflective nostalgia … can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from comparison, judgment or critical reflection" (Boym 50). Instead of Gladstone, the glowering four-time prime minister, *Stoneheart* prefers the "pigeon-splat"-covered Johnson and his knowledge of language (especially his suggestion that language is as multi-layered as the landscape around them) to what the silent Gladstone may have to offer, as does the Gunner: "A word from [Dictionary]. That's a thing well worth having" (199).[22]

[22] St. Clement Danes is often thought of in regards to the nursery rhyme: "Oranges and lemons/ Say the bells of St. Clement's" (the rhyme that another famous London figure, George Orwell, famously alludes to in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). *Stoneheart* doesn't make use of this rhyme, another absence, like the Peter Pan statue, that refuses the usual associations that many London spaces may have with children.

Edie and George find Dictionary frustrating, as his devotion to the preciseness of language makes his rambling explanations difficult to follow, yet he agrees to help when the Gunner asks: "Dictionary, if you can spare a moment of your time we'd like a word" (127). He answers, "What time I have is not my own but that granted by an unknowable providence and so not mine to give. However—… what words I have are in this book, and placed there by mine own labours, so of them I may make free as I will, and they are, as ever, at your pleasure" (128). While Dictionary's obsession with defining words makes him the opposite of what he calls the "crepuscular illumination" (132) of the Sphinx's enigmatic riddles, Edie and George find his words almost as undecipherable, compounded by the "herks and jerks" (122) of his Tourette's syndrome;[23] however, he gives them the answers they are seeking, grudgingly leading them to the sinister Dark Friar whom the Sphinxes alluded to in their riddle. While the children learn that Dictionary's "brain's top of the line" (123), as the Gunner calls it, they also discover that Dictionary is a kind and devoted friend. In one notable example of his loyalty, Dictionary throws himself in front of dragon fire to save George, becoming blinded in the process, but his words set George on his final path to save the city: "I shall miss the sight of this great city, and my friends. … And it *is* a great city, child. … London is the greatest metropolis that ever was. And I feel in my water that it is up to you to ensure it remains so" (*Silvertongue* 182). Dictionary isn't a king who can knight George or give him a lordly title, but he gives him a more important name: "You have the doggedness and the

[23] The *DNB* suggests that "The convulsions that marked [Samuel Johnson's] behaviour in adult life may have derived from congenital factors or from these infant diseases; one theory is that his condition can be diagnosed as Tourette's syndrome, where the symptoms often grow more apparent in adolescence" ("Samuel Johnson"). While many statues are an echo of the person they represent, Johnson is, in many ways, remarkably similar to Boswell's descriptions—warts and all.

grit that has ever been the mark of a true Londoner. This is a city of liberty, made by free men for free men. It is not a city that knuckles easily to oppression. … You will free it again" (183). Dictionary passes the torch of "true Londoner" to George, a responsibility to save the breathing, living city rather than an agenda of restoration. George must prove himself to be a citizen rather than a knight. The mantle of 'citizen' evokes its own kind of London nostalgia, but this mantle is not a simple evocation of pseudo-medieval knighthood that petrifies with time; the "true Londoner" is a title that evolves over time as the city evolves. Here, it is about agency, particularly the 12-year-old child protagonist's agency, a return to Enlightenment-era values that respected the contributions of logical children as a fully-fledged and responsible members of society rather than cosseted creatures who need education before they can enter into society and its responsibilities.

Each of these statue characters testifies to different layers of London. As George and Edie move across the London landscape, their interactions with them offer up layers of London: Boadicea's experience of tragedy, revenge and loss; Mr. Dictionary's stubborn yet truthful concern; and the Gunner's dogged grit are all part of the city's history. *Stoneheart* infuses life directly into these statues teeming with history, symbolism, and familiarity for London residents or visitors. As I discuss in the introduction, Aristotle's "Law of Contiguity" suggests that things that are close to each other in space and time become associated with one another. This theory of contiguity—within the larger framework of contiguous fantasy—works in two ways in *Stoneheart*. First, the proximity of London's statues associates them with each other despite the ahistoricity of these relationships. Anyone acquainted with London cannot help but recognize the many

famous statues that serve as meeting places, waypoints, and memorials to the city's past. In one day, a London visitor can start their morning at the enigmatic sphinxes on the Victoria Embankment, begin a tour of parliament near the flamboyant Richard the Lionheart, share a quiet coffee on the benches next to Hodge the Cat in cozy Gough Square, and watch children climb over the lions at the base of Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square, but they can also visit the changing post-modern sculpture on the fourth plinth in that same square (a giant neon blue rooster when I visited in 2015 and currently (2017) a bronze sculpture of an elongated human thumb called "Really Good"), ogle the mind-bending Grid Man on High Holborn, or feel diminutive next to the giant near-robotic Newton by Eduardo Paolozzi outside the British Library.[24] The sphinxes, Lionheart, Hodge, Trafalgar lions, and contemporary sculptures all come from different time periods, sculptural styles and narrative traditions, yet they are all categorized as London statues. Their proximity in space—within the boundaries of London—and proximity of purpose as public art—tie them together. Second, in a larger sense, Un-London and London are tightly knit together because they share the same space. The statue characters walk the same streets as citizens unaware of the living statues around them, and they are all part of a changing mythology of place; both its statue and human citizens take part in London's dynamic and shifting narrative (as embodied by Trafalgar's fourth plinth). The trilogy's network of statues—the Un-London community *Stoneheart* creates—works because the statues are familiar, contained, proximate and prolific. Tellingly, the most notable character in the novels is a realist statue from the Great War.

[24] Social media channels show readers taking self-guided '*Stoneheart* tours' of the statues around London. Rather than the tours of movie lots and movie locations that Wood mentions are a part of the Harry Potter tours, a Stoneheart tour is an in-depth tour of London's urban geography.

In his commitment to the truth of painful experience, the Gunner stands against restorative nostalgia.

3.3: Jagger's "men who knew about mud and dying first"

In a city with so much triumphal art made to honour monarchy and aristocracy (there are at least 10 statues of Victoria in Greater London, for example), Fletcher's choices are not always the obvious ones as evidenced by the Queen and Dictionary. This is especially true of the main adult voice in the novels, the Gunner (see figure 5).[25] The

Fig. 5 The Gunner, Hyde Park Corner, London, from Heather Cyr; 23 June 2015.

[25] Although he is a major character throughout the first novel, midway through *Stoneheart,* the novels fully establish the Gunner's centrality to the plot by according him narrative perspective. Throughout the rest of the trilogy, the chapters regularly move between George, Edie, and the Gunner's points of view with the occasional chapters from the perspective of other characters such as the Black Friar or the Queen. Among these character-focused chapters, the occasional short chapters (two and three pages) take a fully omniscient point of view, either pulling out to look at a large scene and take stock of the positions of various characters or pushing in to describe an intimate setting like the caged London Stone. Acting as narrated mises-en-scene, we can trace these sequences to Fletcher's work in TV and movies.

Gunner is one of the bronze figures on Charles Sargeant Jagger's "dramatic and brutal" (National Heritage List) Royal Artillery Memorial (1921-1925) in Hyde Park Corner. As a statue, this nameless figure and his brethren represent all artillery soldiers and the sacrifices they made in the trenches of the Great War. As a character, the Gunner embodies the memorial's aesthetic ambitions; he is a quiet hero without hubris, a steadfast soldier who embodies the ideals of endurance and sacrifice the memorial seeks to portray. However, the Gunner is not without flaws (such as initial his abhorrence of Edie due to superstitions about glints). Fletcher's characterization of the Gunner encompasses tension between the artist's sculptural realism and the novel's fantastic essence—after all, he is a living statue in a city of full of similar wonders. In this way, he represents the text's compelling central duality between consensus reality and fantasy.

Fittingly, Jagger's Gunner statue was the initial inspiration for the *Stoneheart* trilogy. In the first scene of the books, when George is running from the pterodactyl statue, he finds himself cornered against the Royal Artillery Memorial. When he looks around for help, he "look[s] up at a dark statue, a soldier, a gunner in World War One uniform, tin hat dipped down over his eyes, arms spread out against the stone as if he was resting" (*Stoneheart* 28). In an interview, Fletcher notes that a glimpse of this statue led him to the world of *Stoneheart* and that it was the Gunner's rain cape that first caught his attention as a child: "[…] I was in the back of my dad's car, as a kid, going past the Royal Artillery Memorial. I saw the gunner, the one with the cape, and I thought he looked like Batman" (Hachette).[26] In his first meeting with the Gunner, George notices this particular

[26] Hodder Children's Books is Fletcher's publisher for the *Stoneheart* and related *London Pride* trilogies as well as his standalone *Far Rockaway*. His publisher for *The Oversight*—his recent in-progress "adult" fantasy series—is Orbit. Both are divisions of the Hachette Book Group. In an interview on the Hachette web site, Fletcher explains how the statues became his way of mapping the city—and the Jaggers were the

feature of the statue: "And over his shoulders was a waterproof cape that for an instant George had mistaken for wings" (*Stoneheart* 28). The rain cape is imagined by the child Fletcher as a superhero cape and by George as wings, but both learn that it is metonymy for a different kind of heroism, a seemingly mundane detail that speaks to Jagger's insistence that soldiers be presented in a realist mode, prepared for the harsh conditions of trench warfare. When he first remembers seeing the statue, Fletcher says he was about five or six years old and interested in comic books:

> I thought all heroes had capes and I thought he looked like a hero because he had a cape. In later years I realised it was a groundsheet to keep the rain off. […] [T]hat statue always stuck in my mind as a child, so vivid I used to imagine what it would be like if he stepped off his plinth, and that led to the whole *Stoneheart* world, many years later. (Hachette 2015)

In *Stoneheart*, Fletcher's idea of a "hero" has obviously shifted from when he was a small child, changing from a wholly imaginary figure who uses gadgets and superhero strength to save a fictional city to the Gunner, an ordinary soldier who does what he must to protect George and London, even if that means sacrificing himself. A telling element in Fletcher's transition from a child's impression of Batman to his deliberate authorial choices, the Gunner's "cape" morphs from an aesthetic element of fantasy—the cape and mask cooked up as a costume to demarcate the singular nature of the superhero—to a piece of practical weather-protection gear carried by thousands of soldiers. The Gunner is

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first statues he recollects; first, he spotted the Gunner and then another Jagger statue "the Shackleton statue on the side of the Royal Geographical Society – he has a balaclava on and the furry mittens—and I remember noticing him […]. When I went round London as a kid the statues became my navigation points rather than the buildings, and I'd always look out for them" (Hachette).

a singular character because of his relationship with George and Edie, but he doesn't have a monopoly on heroism. He's not one hero who stands above the rest like Batman; in fact, his ability to recognize and value the knowledge and significance of other less martial statues, like Dictionary, is one of his most telling traits. His purpose as a statue is to offer a locus for the memorialization and mourning of all artillery soldiers. In the heart of the city's geography, the Royal Artillery Memorial represents a particularly brutal episode in Britain's history and the Gunner brings elements of this representation to life.

Fletcher is concerned with people "stepping up," the idea that people in tough circumstances must become inured to the danger around them: what is terrifying in isolation, over time becomes more bearable. Fletcher is concerned with the terror, not just the fantasy; just like a sculptor, he is concerned with the process of molding and shaping that which is painful and difficult. Rather than coming of age within a child-friendly landscape that slowly challenges him, from the moment George breaks the dragon's head at the Natural History Museum, he is immediately confronted with the strangeness and the terror of the war between the factions of London statues. George must be forged by his tests, but not in a mold that mirrors traditional fantasy; his path must also include looking past what seems like the 'right' thing to do and learning critical thinking skills, from the refusal to be cowed by tradition like Boadicea to the suspicion and manipulation of words like Dictionary. Like the young Fletcher who thought that the Gunner statue looked like Batman, he must learn that heroism is not necessarily based on the brightly colored pictures from comic books. At one point in the story, George is being chased by gargoyles and he takes refuge within St. Pancreas where he grabs a hammer from a renovation site to defend himself: "He remembered a comic book his dad had in his

workroom, a memory of his own childhood—The Mighty Thor. He'd been a superhero with a hammer like this. George didn't feel much like a superhero right now as he teetered his way carefully along the skeletonized floor joints. The sound of gargoyles tracking him seemed to be coming closer and closer" (*Ironhand* 235). The Gunner is not a superhero; he's a different kind of hero, rooted in mundane experience. And George, with the Gunner's help, is learning both that experience must replace his previous assumptions about the world and that his grief at his father's loss is something he must work his way through in order to be able to reflect and learn. Hard experience and grief connect George to both Gunner and Jagger; both teach their audiences that the reality of heroism is harder and much more prosaic than an imagined comic book depiction of it.

Because of its very nature as art commissioned as civic or national monuments, public statuary has a singular obsession with timelessness. The artist must balance his or her style, the subject, and the public purpose of the art. In *Stoneheart*, Fletcher takes these often-competing perspectives into account in his figuring of the statues as characters. The human statue characters each retain something of both their artist and subject, straddling a line between the maker—his or her intentions, artistic style and time period—and the model—their historical milieu, deeds and public knowledge about them—to create unique personalities that are neither one nor the other. As George grapples with understanding the Gunner and coming to terms with his own identity as a maker, it becomes apparent that even the categories of the statues are unstable. Depending on the will of their maker, they are ostensibly split into the two categories of Spit and Taint: Spits are generally the human or mainly humanoid statues, and Taints are the non-human

or strikingly hybrid statues like gargoyles. The Gunner describes the life force of the Spits:

> A spit is a statue that the 'maker'—sculptor, stonecarver, whatever—has made to represent someone human. And because of that, while a maker works, something of that must flow into us, and fills that hole the taints have eating away inside them. I mean, a statue of Lord Kitchener ain't Lord Kitchener, but he's – well, he's what the artist thought and knew about Lord Kitchener. It's like he's got a spark of Kitchener's spirit in him. He's the spirit and image of Lord Kitchener. The 'spit' and image if you like. That make sense? (*Stoneheart* 51)

The Gunner goes on to somewhat cryptically yet somewhat plainly explain that spits, or human statues like him, are subject to the will of the artist who created them: "[m]akers make the made, and the made must mark their maker's meaning" (*Stoneheart* 71), whereas "taints"—like gargoyles—have a more feral nature and are essentially lacking a spark of human soul. However, as George learns by observing which statues take the side of the Darkness and which fight against it, there are hybrid statues like the Sphinxes who guard Cleopatra's Needle[27] on the Embankment and Bow Boy—the Anteros statue in Piccadilly Circus—who fall into neither category and can seemingly choose their fate as "spit" or "taint." Their hybrid nature reinforces the dual purpose of these statues to reveal both the intentions of their makers and how they were made. As the most important "spit" in the series, the Gunner reveals much about this strategy.

[27] Fletcher uses the obelisk known as "Cleopatra's Needle" on Embankment as a key meeting place in the novel. Interestingly, while the obelisk is Egyptian (moved to London with much fanfare in 1888) and Egyptian antiquities are often used as forces of mysterious power in many children's fantasies, Fletcher's emphasis is on the Sphinx statues themselves. They were created and forged in London.

In her article "The Stones of London: Public Art in Charlie Fletcher's Stoneheart Trilogy," Andelys Wood examines *Stoneheart*'s World War One statues. The Euston Mob, four soldiers at the Euston War Memorial at Euston Railway Station; the "Railway Man" from Paddington station, another Jagger statue from 1922; the Fusilier from the Royal Fusiliers Memorial on High Holborn; and others all represent ordinary soldiers rather than generals or allegorical figures: "Besides their association with World War One, they all share an attitude of enduring hardship, of getting on with things" (Wood). This attitude is central to the Gunner's persona and to the lessons he imparts to George: "You need to pay attention, son. Because whatever you woke up thinking are the rules? … All bets are off. It's a whole new ball of chalk. … you want to survive this, you need to think first and ask the right questions" (49). By drawing a comparison between the real world statues in *Stoneheart* and the lack of London landmarks in *Harry Potter,* Wood shows "Fletcher's books can be seen as part of an adult debate about the role of public art and architecture in London" (Wood). While her article offers a compelling list of these soldier characters, it does not offer in-depth interpretation of any one statue or the particular importance of the Gunner over any of these other statues. The attitude of endurance and sacrifice is most poignantly seen in Jagger's sculptural style, and it is the Gunner who fully represents the complex connections between the art of statuary, characterization, and the novels' larger narrative strategy of realism.

The figures on the Royal Artillery Memorial, unveiled in 1925 as a public symbol of commemoration and mourning for the soldiers of World War I, are clearly not fantastical figures like the Batman of child-aged Fletcher's imagination. Known for Jagger's "unsparing and even confrontational realism" (Black, "Struggle" 24), the

memorial features bronze statues of four soldiers from an artillery unit posed around a large rectangular central plinth made of Portland stone and carved with reliefs. A giant stone Howitzer sits on top. Jagger's realist style, which jarringly evokes the realities of actual combat, was not the type of memorial that people were used to. However, in an editorial written upon its unveiling in October 1925, the *Manchester Guardian* clearly approved of the realist style of this important monument, suggesting that the families that went through the war needed a place to mourn and remember that was not a typically sanitized memorial meant to stir national pride: "Men will bring their wives and children here to show them things that they have never been able to tell them—what happened and what they went through … It is a terrible revelation long overdue" (qtd in Black 143). The memorial, focusing on "details not symbols" (Boym xviii), evokes a painful, cathartic, and reflective nostalgia as opposed to a sterile restorative version.

Stoneheart's Gunner acts a gruff father figure for George and Edie, but he also represents the trilogy's larger construction of London and the novels' relationship with the past. As opposed to restorative nostalgia, which "is not simply 'forgetting of reality' but a psychotic substitution of actual experiences with a dark conspiratorial vision" (43), the Gunner's relationship with the past is more attuned with reflective nostalgia which "is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude" (49). The Gunner explains that while he shares much in common with all the human statues, his closest "family" members are the other statues made by Jagger:

> There's Jaggers all over London. Jagger did well out of the war. People liked what he done, making us look like heroes, but nothing crowing about it. Made us look like men who knew about mud and dying first, then made us look like heroes

> after. For them that had lost sons and husbands, we looked like the men they wanted to remember them as, the men they hoped they'd become before the bloody generals sent them out to be butchered by the Boche. (*Stoneheart* 52)[28]

A look around Hyde Park Corner reveals the difference between Jagger's work, with its focus on realism, and what was traditionally seen as appropriate public statuary to commemorate war. The Gunner looks solemn and grim compared to the other statuary in the high-traffic Hyde Park Corner: the high realism of the stately and aristocratic Wellington equestrian statue, and the idealism of the allegorical Victory in her chariot above the Wellington Arch seem almost frivolous next to the solidity and weight of Jagger's nearby memorial.[29] In particular, the Machine Gun Corps Memorial, designed by Francis Derwent Wood, is an apt point of comparison.[30] While the Machine Gun Corps Memorial as a whole shows stylistic conventions shifting towards realism with its inclusion of Vickers Guns shrouded in laurels to either side of the figure in the centre—a nod to the new focus on the real experiences of soldiers in the Great War—the human figure is allegorical rather than realistic; it is a classically lean, beautiful and nearly nude David leaning on Goliath's sword—an idealized representation here creates an absence:

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[28] Some of Jagger's most notable works in London include the Great Western Railway War Memorial on Platform 1 of Paddington station that features a soldier reading a letter from home, a statue of Shackleton wrapped in layers of cold weather gear on the façade of the Royal Geographical Society building in Kensington, and a bronze relief of a soldier in 'No Man's Land' loaned to the Victoria and Albert Museum by the Tate. The Tate catalogue describes the relief, one of his first post-war works, as "Corpses stranded on barbed wire are ranged across a ravaged landscape, while the solitary live figure of the look-out in the foreground, a surrogate for the spectator, uses them for cover" (Tate 2015).

[29] As the Corner is near Apsley House, it contains two memorials to the first Duke of Wellington, the equestrian statue and the arch. The arch was designed by Decimus Burton and installed in 1846. The bronze allegorical Victory in her chariot pulled by horses, titled "The Angel of Peace Descending on the Quadriga of Victory" was designed by Adrian Jones and placed atop the arch in 1912. The equestrian statue flanked by four figures features Wellington upon his favourite horse, Copenhagen, and was designed by Joseph Boehm and unveiled in 1888.

[30] Unveiled in Hyde Park Corner in the same year as the Royal Artillery Memorial (1925), Derwent's piece was part of the prolific building of public monuments between the wars and the debate about how public mourning should be commemorated.

who or what is being remembered? The soldiers or the myth of soldiering? In a major contrast to the smaller guns flanking Derwent's central David, a huge Howitzer surmounts Jagger's memorial.[31] In contrast to the classically posed David, Jagger's bronze soldiers are solid figures with grim faces dressed in their heavy gear and tin helmets. Jagger's bold artistic style re-inscribes how war memorials channeled mourning and how art could contribute to the public conversation about sacrifice and heroism. The spirit of "heroic obstinacy" (Glaves-Smith 70) is evident in the design of the memorial's four human statues and in the way that Fletcher figures many of the World War One statues in the books as "men who knew about mud and dying first, then made us look like heroes after"[32] (*Stoneheart* 52). Fletcher's privileging of World War One statues (particularly Jagger's style) illuminates the paradox of realism within the fantasy, but comparing the Jagger statues with the allegorical David shows that war itself is often made fantastic. By including these World War One statues but insisting on Jagger's realist works as the inspiration—and imbuing them with a grim outlook on war—Fletcher's trilogy insists on disentangling a nostalgia that sees the past "not as duration but a perfect snapshot" (Boym 49) from one that understands that the past is not innocent. As Boym suggests, "a modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home at once" (50).

[31] This move to make the weaponry central was met with some hostility: "Lord Curzon notoriously dismissed the memorial as 'a toad squatting, about to spit fire out of its mouth... nothing more hideous could ever be conceived'" (National Heritage List 2015). When Jagger met resistance to including weaponry so prominently in his design, Jonathan Black says Jagger "appears to have taken the view that the memorial was a tribute to gunners who had been killed while operating their weapons" (Black, "Manifold Instruments" 166). His dedication to the true war experience of soldiers informed his insistence that the design include the gun because "he did not at all want to present them as passive victims awaiting a grim fate without engaging in the most intense physical activity" (Black 166). However, the Royal Artillery Memorial is not meant to show the kind of action that might be seen in depictions of infantrymen rather than gunners: "In regimental tradition the exemplar is not so much the man involved in the sudden flurry of action but the one who demonstrates a kind of heroic obstinacy in sticking by the guns until death. Teamwork is generally emphasized above individual valour" (Glaves-Smith 70).

[32] The howitzer is carved in the same Portland stone as the base, making the soldier sculptures on each of the four sides of the memorial stand out prominently.

The post-war era brought artists many opportunities as memorial committees clamoured to erect statuary that would recognize the magnitude of Britain's losses and offer the public spaces where they could focus their collective mourning. Jagger biographer Ann Compton suggests that "[p]ublic expectation placed a moral duty on sculptors comparable to military service" (Compton, *The Sculpture of Charles Sargeant Jagger* 27). Likewise, a 1920 article in the *Observer* emphasizes the high burden public expectations placed on these post-war artists: "never in history has there been a higher test of the capacity for expression in stone and never men or deeds worthier of commemoration" (qtd in Compton 27). To add to these weighty expectations, the artists were subject to many competing forces. As Daniel J. Sherman explains, "The political dimension of commemoration resides in the way it channels mourning in a direction that conforms to dominant perceptions of the national interest" (Sherman 83). Thus, public war art is concerned with an enduring national legacy, "[b]ut the work of commemoration is also cultural: it inscribes or reinscribes a set of symbolic codes, ordering discourses, and master narratives that recent events, perhaps the very ones commemorated, have disrupted, newly established, or challenged" (Sherman 83-4). Jagger's Royal Artillery Memorial, inspired by the recent events of the most devastating war in memory, re-orders discourses of public commemoration through Jagger's particular brand of realism developed over his career, the memorial's specific use of weaponry in the overall design, its "soldier-labourer" statues that transcend boundaries of class and rank, and its place among the sculpture of Jagger's contemporaries. As a soldier himself, Jagger was

determined to bring a measure of truth to post-war art, believing that realism was the most honest way to honour the war dead.[33]

In Fletcher's work, as in Jagger's, these soldier characters are extremely capable, but they hardly trumpet combat. The Officer, the Gunner's comrade, articulates a much more hardened perspective: "It's War then. […] A bloody meat-grinding war. And we're going to be in the middle, damn it" (*Silvertongue* 14). The Officer and other Jagger statues do not favour battle; the Officer is deliberate in his condemnation of the wastefulness of violence: "Nothing worse than war" (14). In fact, the realism of the Gunner and all of the novel's World War One soldiers is best understood not as nostalgic evocation of heroism, but rather as a refusal to derive nostalgic comfort from history. Jagger's bronze soldiers are solid figures with grim faces dressed in their heavy gear and tin helmets. The only faceless figure is the supine corpse of a dead soldier at the end of the memorial, draped in a greatcoat (that poignant symbol of the soldier), the soles of his hob-nailed boots facing the park path.[34] Against some complaint by committee members, Jagger eschewed dress uniform, Classical poses and typical iconography meant to

[33] Situated in one of London's most high-traffic areas, the memorial was commissioned and funded by the Royal Artillery War Commemoration Fund (RAWCF) and constructed between 1921 and 1925 by Jagger in collaboration with architect Lionel Pearson. His harrowing war experience and subsequent decoration played an important part in earning him what history would see as his most important commission. The highly visible Royal Artillery Memorial was unveiled in 1925 as a public symbol of commemoration and mourning for the 49,706 artillery soldiers who died in World War I. At the time, the new memorial was met with much fanfare and both negative and positive reactions from the public, the media, and the artistic community. His "searing war service" in Italy, Belgium and Northern France "provided the key motivation for his desire to overhaul and reform British sculpture, indeed to develop and foster a 'new form of sculpture for England' that would embrace modernity, faithfully depict the latest technology and yet remain stylistically accessible to the public" (Black 26).

[34] The National Heritage List says, "the detailed representation of a huge gun was a daring rejection of traditional modes of commemoration. The inclusion of an over-life size corpse was boldly direct and is also without parallel on any major British memorial" (National Heritage List 2015). In fact, the inclusion of the corpse of a soldier is very rare among British memorials and Jagger argued against opposition that said it would be too unseemly and distressing for public art.

valorize the nation in allegorical terms over the humanity of the soldiers. As Jagger put it, "'I got to love Tommy in the trenches and I've tried to show him as I knew him—not as he looked on parade at home'" (qtd in Glaves-Smith, *War and Peace* 52). Jagger's statues, like Fletcher's fantasy, is devoted to uncovering what lies beyond the celebratory façade of monumentalization. The Gunner tells George, "people liked what [Jagger] done" (*Stoneheart* 52) because of the truthfulness of the statues. In this way, Jagger's bold artistic style re-inscribes how war memorials channeled mourning and how art could contribute to the public conversation about sacrifice and heroism, a theme that Fletcher continues by making the Gunner George's support and guide.

As George's guide, the Gunner, like his Officer, does not relish combat; his attitude is one of grimly enduring what must be done, something he models for George and Edie throughout the series when he sacrifices himself first to the fire of the Temple Bar dragon in *Stoneheart*, and then, after George saves him, in *Silvertongue,* he again sacrifices himself to a curse by the Walker, John Dee, who over the centuries wanders the streets of London alone, working for the Darkness in a bid to gain limitless power. The Gunner's first act in the novel, destroying the pterodactyl statue, is a sacrifice of its own. He breaks the truce between the warring statues, but he does his duty to save George: "An unfamiliar voice came from the Gunner's throat. A gravelly voice. A cockney voice. […] 'Blimey. You got no idea what you just started, have you?'" (33). This "cockney voice" fits with Charles Sargeant Jagger's vow to sculpt real soldiers rather than generals or kings; not only does it highlight the Gunner's economic class, but it marks him out as one of Dictionary's "true Londoners."[35] The clipped rhythm and simple phrasings in his

[35] While Fletcher calls his character the "Gunner," the statue is itself often referred to in descriptions of the memorial as "the Driver" because of the bridle chains dangling from beneath his rain cloak. While horses

speech are indicative of the Gunner's refusal to dwell on issues that are not pertinent to the task at hand, but he is obviously scarred from the war experience that Jagger sculpted into his statues: "He seemed to catch himself. George thought it looked like he was pulling himself back into the here and now from a long way off" (*Stoneheart* 47). As an unnamed soldier in a city full of statues with titles and crowns, the Gunner represents his sculptor's beliefs about how war should be memorialized: with respect for the harsh realities of combat.

3.4: Refusing teleological closure

When George starts his journey in the Whale Hall of the Natural History Museum, he looks up at the belly of the museum's famous whale specimen and thinks he's in the realm of danger among bullies and a mean teacher. He begins the series with a naïve sentiment that explains both the pain he is feeling after his Dad's death and the painful difficulties of growing up: "On the class trip before this one they'd been to the War Museum and learned about trench warfare. George had thought that's what life felt like: keeping your head below the parapet so you wouldn't get hit" (1). That is until a few minutes later, when he steps out into the street and the context of danger changes. He is no longer within the relatively safe "realm of danger" in the child-centered Natural History Museum. Instead, he's thrown into the fantasy world within London's very adult

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are not depicted in the Royal Artillery Memorial, the bridle chains point to the Gunner's job: "'Horse Artillery. We pulled the guns through the mud and tried not to kill the nags doing it. Lose a horse, lose the guns. Lose the guns, lose the battle. Lose enough battles, and well—'" (*Stoneheart* 47). When George takes the Gunner's place for the night on his plinth, the Gunner's role in the unit is clear because George finds himself transported back in time to a World War One battle where he must calm the horses that pull the guns. Jagger's memorial does not feature horses as it focuses on the human subjects. This contrasts with many military statues that place generals on horseback far above the viewer. Jagger chose to keep his statues closer to the ground to reinforce their realism.

landscape, where, in an episode in which George takes the Gunner's place on his plinth, he learns that real warfare is nothing like he'd imagined. In *Ironhand*, the Gunner is kidnapped, so George decides to take his place and "stand to" on the Gunner's plinth for "turn o' day" so that the Gunner will not become a lifeless statue. Rather than sacrifice his friend, George takes the Gunner's place not knowing what exactly will happen. The Officer explains by gesturing at the bas relief carvings along the Royal Artillery Memorial: "All that, I'm afraid. Carnage, slaughter, screaming fear, bloody waste of good men and horses. We stand to and relive it every night. It's who we are and it reminds us why we're here. It's the maker's purpose" (*Ironhand* 308). But he welcomes George to duty nonetheless, as the Officer can see that this is one of George's tests for choosing The Hard Way: "[F]or the next hour, old son, you're going to be eye-deep in hell" (308). Though he is still clutching the hammer from earlier that he had compared to the comic book Thor, in a gesture that reveals the agency and knowledge his experiences have given him, George "put down the hammer, picked up the [Gunner's horse]whip and felt the solid heft of the thing in his hand" (304). Here, he moves away from a comforting and idealized notion of heroism by putting down the hammer that represented an imaginary superhero's weapon, picking up the Gunner's seemingly mundane but essential piece of gear, and stepping up onto the plinth to save his friend despite the danger and horror awaiting him. At turn of day, he suddenly sees the past that the Gunner must live through every night: George finds himself looking from inside a man's eyes while he tries to steady horses during a bombing; "he was, as advertised, eye-deep in hell" (332). George suffers through the barrage with a fellow soldier he believes to be his father until, finally, the soldier dies in a blast and George loses his father all over again.

Through his journey from the museum school trip through a horrifying vision of war that draws on his most excruciating personal memories, George has learned, painfully, that there is more to being a soldier and more to life than "keeping your head below the parapet so you wouldn't get hit" (1). The books manage to both recognize George's pain among the school bullies as very real—there is no move to infantilize George's feelings, coping with his father's death and his feeling that he doesn't belong becomes a part of his journey—while introducing him to the actual horrors of war that Jagger's artistic style attempts to convey through the memorial. The pain of the past is just as layered and nuanced as the city itself.

History is observed through material "layers" or geographical strata, and *Stoneheart* plays with the material conception of historical layers by making "Un-London" another layer on the face of the city. As George learns, "London Town's more than just any old city. It's like the rock and the clay and the dirt it sits on. It's got layers. [He] just fell through one into another" (*Stoneheart* 64). The novels introduce the idea that the layers of London are not merely material—rock, clay and dirt. Instead, this evidence of past London is a physical remnant of the true layers of a city, layers that are made of geography and history, yes, but also myth and memory:

> The 'why' of it doesn't matter. It's just something that 'is', the same way the sky or a sparrow just is. It's like that and it's always been like that. London is a place of power and it was a place of power before people first erected the first shelter here. It was a place of power before people built stockades or roundhouses or temples or huts on it. Why, it was a place of power before the thought of temples had even occurred to man. It was a place of power when the wide arch of the sky was temple enough for all

> men. Look along the river; look at the Tower of London. Ancient? It's a Johnny-come-lately. It was a Christian church, and before that a Roman temple and before that a shrine to a Celtic crow-god and before that a shrine to a god with horns on his head and before that only the Raven himself remembers. All pasts are all still there, layered under the skin. (*Stoneheart* 159)

The city remembers all of these pasts under its literal skin, the crust of its geographical imprint. Archaeologists can dig into London and find the physical evidence of many histories, but Fletcher contends that physical objects do not merely represent history. The stones *are* the vessels of memory. Memory plays a major role in the novels, and it is manifested in the physical objects of the city. As the Gunner explains in his characteristically blunt way, "'Memory always finds a way to survive. Even if there's no one left to do the remembering, it locks itself away in the stones and waits for one of her sort to pole up and unlock it'" (*Stoneheart* 404). Edie's painful glinting—aside from the actual physical pain, Edie's episodes in the book allow her to see bombings in both world wars—and George's choice to take "the Hard Way" show that memory is more than just a nostalgic vision of the past.

Fletcher's London is a construct made of all of these pieces, both material and narrative, and his novels perform the fact that London is constantly evolving. As Alex Murray argues in his essay about Michael Moorcock's fantasy story "London Bone," "Although excavation of a fossil is always accompanied by a notion of teleological closure in that the object once excavated will not change materially over time, the geological history of London can never have that certainty, as the city itself constantly changes and expands…. London, with its endless process of construction, consistently

yields new geological secrets" (Murray 4). As the city evolves and adds more material layers, so do the memories within its landscape. When it comes to the material history of the city, Fletcher's Un-London disrupts the notion of teleological closure. The clay and bronze of statuary do not complete their journey when they are shaped into final forms; instead the statues are infused with life. He gives elements of the landscape literal memories when he brings the statue characters to life. Fletcher takes the idea that places have memory and pushes it to a narrative extreme: London's memories are within its very stones (and statues). In this way, the fantasy elements are another seam in the richly dense strata of a city that literature, culture and memory have already made mythical in so many ways. What ties the fantasy elements to the landscape is that Fletcher gives these memories a tactile physical presence.

By bringing all the layers of the past together at once, employing statues that question the traditional mode of commemoration and replacing pastoral spaces with urban ones, *Stoneheart* embraces what Boym calls *reflective nostalgia*, "a positive force that helps us explore our experience, and can offer an alternative to an uncritical acceptance of the present" (xvii). Boym suggests that "reflection on nostalgia might bring us to redefine critical modernity and its temporal ambivalence and cultural contradictions" (31). However, Stoneheart rejects what she calls restorative nostalgia, an uncritical "*invented* tradition—a dogmatic, stable myth that gives you a coherent version of the past" prevalent in much of children's fantasy (Boym xvii). She argues, "The object of romantic nostalgia must be beyond the present space of experience, somewhere in the twilight of the past or on an island of utopia where time has happily stopped, as on an antique clock"

(13). This could be a description of a safely contained children's fantasy or a description of how culture constructs childhood itself.

There is a temptation to try and demarcate childhood's borders, and this type of 'mapping' becomes a nostalgic impulse informed by restorative nostalgia. Since "[c]hildhood is inaccessible phenomenologically and geographically" (Honeyman 117), what Boym has to say about nostalgia, more generally, illuminates the traditional ideal of childhood and its nostalgic dimensions: "Nostalgic manifestations are side effects of the teleology of progress. […] What is crucial is that nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division, but instead of aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearns for the particular" (Boym 10-11). The restorative nostalgic children's fantasy looks to the past, to the 'primitive,' to the 'wild' to tap into nostalgia that may not be for those places—as they are fantasy spaces—but for childhood itself. Fletcher rejects this nostalgic ideal, instead focusing intensely on the contradictory and rich multifaceted temporal and geographical dimensions of London's urban spaces: "Nostalgia speaks in puzzles and riddles, so one must face them in order to not to become its next victim—or its next victimizer" (Boym xvii). In particular, Fletcher's alignment with Jagger's sculptural realism represents history as the "living warp and weft of the city itself" (*Ironhand* 225), and that history is more complex than a singular "dogmatic, stable myth" (Boym xvii) of London's identity.

Chapter 4

Behind Glass: Questioning the Authority of the Museum Space in R.L. LaFevers' *Theodosia Throckmorton* series and Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife*

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently.
—Umberto Eco

When Lucy first sees the White Witch's courtyard full of stone figures in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,* she is appalled: "What an extraordinary place!' cried Lucy. 'All those stone animals—and people too! It's—it's like a museum" (126). To Lucy, the witch has created a "museum" by rendering the subjects of her spell into literal objects to be assembled together in a gruesome collection. The witch's statues are the opposite of Charlie Fletcher's statues in *Stoneheart* who are dynamic, animated characters at liberty in the outdoor urban spaces of London; instead, her "museum," contained inside an eerie castle courtyard, is disturbingly quiet and uncannily lifeless, alienating the child protagonist. But when Aslan breathes life back into the frozen statues, "The courtyard no longer looked like a museum; it looked like a zoo" (127). A delighted Lucy revels in the celebration brought about by the destruction of the "museum" and the liberation of Narnia's citizens; the riotous noises and action of the "zoo" are much more life-affirming: the recent past of the White Witch's reign is ending, and Narnia is being restored to the idyllic past of legend. Because museums are so closely associated with both constructions of the past and education (coming into knowledge), they feature prominently in children's literature, but Lucy's identification of the museum as an alienating space fits with many other child protagonists' experiences: examples include

both Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) and Susan Cooper's *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), which feature the donation of important objects to the British Museum; in both texts, the orderliness and prominence of the institution make it an isolating place where the child protagonists have little agency.[1]

The museum, in many ways, is a metonym for the interconnectedness of space and history: The child in the museum encounters exhibits that show time and space compressed and presented in a narrative history. Often the place of a particular museum, like the British Museum, is the child's first encounter with both the wider world (outside of their local environs) and the many layers of history it represents. While my previous chapters dealt with the construction and representation of larger national and urban landscapes (and the subversion of their traditional representation in children's fantasies), the museum offers a similarly worthwhile site of interrogation because it is at once localized and decentralized. The British Museum, a place figured in many children's books, is central to the identity of Bloomsbury: its neo-classical columns and great court are a recognizable London sight woven into the fabric of the city and the nation.[2] Simultaneously, its famous displays, by bringing together and ordering objects (fragments that represent landscape), transport the viewer away from the local to places

[1] Besides placing the grail found in *Over Sea, Under Stone* in the British Museum, Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* also makes prominent use of the words inscribed on the Alfred Stone, which resides in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

[2] In Chapter 2, I discuss an episode in Rick Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles* in which the trilogy's fantastic elements are unleashed when the protagonists' father uses a spell to blow up the Rosetta Stone in the Egyptian wing of the British Museum. The British Museum is also heavily featured in the companion series to Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart*, *Dragon Shield*. The British Museum and its staff are featured in *Theodosia and the Staff of Osiris* (see below). Among other books that include the British Museum are Francesca Simon's *The Sleeping Army* (2011), which begins in the British Museum but quickly takes the child protagonist to the Otherworld of Asgard after she awakes the sleeping Lewisham Chessmen, and Jonathan Stroud's *Golem's Eye* (2004) also features the British Museum (it's partially destroyed in the course of the action), but this book is set in an alternate history timeline.

faraway in space and time, among them ancient Athens, Anglo-Saxon East Anglia, and nineteenth-century Western Canada. In this way, encyclopedic museums like the British Museum are time spatialized, constructed palimpsests of different eras and places.

Since children are often uncritically associated with the past and the primitive, this dissertation focuses on texts that subvert this paradigm by questioning how past children's fantasies depend upon nostalgia and conservative notions of "heritage" in their landscapes, what spaces children belong in, and what places are appropriate for the uses of fantasy. The dependency on the nostalgic landscape is interrelated with nostalgic constructions of childhood innocence; like the museum, both the nostalgic landscape and the "innocent" child are subject to discourses of conservation, preservation and restoration. However, the texts that I examine here, R.L. LaFevers' *Theodosia Throckmorton* series and Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife* among others, refuse—or, at the very least, question—traditional representations of museum spaces and therefore the impulses of conservation, preservation, and restoration. Like the novels considered in other chapters in this dissertation, those examined here utilize the fantastic to challenge these impulses; they do so in large part by questioning the institution of the museum.

Many non-fantastic children's books feature child viewers learning about history through artifacts, their displays and their location in relation to other artifacts in a safe and welcoming space.[3] Virginia Zimmerman suggests that the "coming-of-age process parallels the way an object accumulates meaning. The significance of a relic is limited when the object is isolated, but when it is curated along with other objects, it accrues

[3] For further examples, Zoe Toft's blog "Playing by the Book" offers a long list of the children's and YA books that make use of museum artifacts displayed in public museums across the world. Along with *The Red Pyramid* and *The Story of the Amulet*, she includes examples such as *The Mildenhall Treasure* by Roald Dahl, *The Golem's Eye* by Jonathan Stroud, and *Ballet Shoes* by Noel Streatfeild,

layers of meaning" (43). In this way, Zimmerman suggests the child protagonist in the museum is also undergoing curation, a part of the museum's construct and ideology. However, the fantastic often complicates that straightforward interaction as magic is wont to do. Perhaps one reason museums can be found in many contiguous fantasies is because contiguous fantasies make use of the layers of the past within the landscape to layer fantasy with consensus reality, and museums themselves use objects taken from and representative of landscapes that are arranged into narrative sequences and are often sown with myth and story. Both the contiguous fantasy and the museum are invested in (re)ordering the past. These constructed layered histories recall Jane Suzanne Carroll's suggestion about the relationship between narrative, time and landscape: "just as time is not a single moment but a synchronic mesh of instances, the landscape is not a two-dimensional unit, but rather a kind of thick palimpsest where time and space are directly correlated" (141); however, the museum space is a completely constructed and curated palimpsest. There is no natural topography or stratum of geological time to put human activities in context; rather, the relationships between layers of time are presented through objects (representative fragments of the landscape) excavated, transported, and re-spatialized for the viewer to create the place of a specific museum. Curators make these relationships explicit through tour commentary, labels, audioguides, and displays. The interplay between narrative, time, and history surrounding museum exhibits helps to explain why museums feature prominently in many children's fantasies, where artifacts are often the conduits for their fantastic elements.

There is little scholarship on the role of the museum in children's fantasy, but in *Four British Fantasists*, Charles Butler takes a few short pages to make some evocative

suggestions about museums in children's fantasy, which he says "are sources of information (sometimes mediated by a friendly curator), but they are also typically figured as temples of narrowly-defined fact" and "quintessentially adult places in which adult language and authority prevail" (51).[4] In this way, the museum can also be an extension of institutional authority.[5] With reference to Cooper, Butler sketches some broad strokes that readers of children's fantasy will immediately recognize as central to a number of these texts:

> In short, the museum embodies a complex set of meanings. It is a place committed to knowledge of and preservation of the past. Nevertheless, it may form an obstacle to the proper and traditional function of objects, or at best a less satisfactory alternative to it. In these books, the donation of an object to a museum is not only figured as a ceding of power from children to adults, but also a transition from action to knowledge, and from use to conservation. (51)

The act of preservation removes objects from their place in the outside world, whether that be a cave in Cornwall or a junk shop in Bloomsbury, rendering them part of the museum space. And the act of conservation, the reification of the found object as *museum object,* renders them static. When the object is placed in the museum, it is safely catalogued and becomes a part of the collection with the matrix of meanings that the collection confers; however, in the case of magic items within a fantasy, this can

[4] For example, in Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart,* which I discuss in Chapter 3, the novel begins in the Natural History Museum in London, where the protagonist George is suffering through a school trip, subject to the bullying of his school mates and his hostile teacher. Punished for a minor infraction, George is not allowed to continue on the tour of the museum and is left under the less than watchful eyes of the museum guards. He soon slips out the doors and into Kensington. Expelled from the authority represented by his school trip and the museum, George begins his adventures which lead him to "Un-London." Like many child protagonists, George's quests cannot be realized within the confines of the museum's control.
[5] The quest must move beyond the confines of the museum's authority in children's fantasies including Riordan's *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief.*

potentially close down the fantastic, returning the narrative to quotidian reality. This, too, can be true of child protagonists who are stripped of their agency within the museum; they can be represented as static within the museum's space of adult authority. Rather than featuring children who learn about history within the museum space, both *The Story of the Amulet* and *Over Sea, Under Stone* offer a denouement in which a dangerous magic object is taken from the hands of its child users and donated to a museum. However, in doing so, the authors seem to accede to the authority and safety of the museum space asserted by many non-fantastic texts. In these texts, the donation of the fantastic object amplifies the representation of the museum as a safe haven.[6]

However, by comparing these texts with others such as *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos* and *The Subtle Knife* that question the museum's authority, I argue that the represented museum, which often serves as a storing house for the past, can also be a site of resistance and critique, challenging the notions of conservation, preservation, and restoration (and the problematic associations with nationhood that these narratives often incur). The traditional representation of the museum, drawn from the Victorians, shows children the museum is static and authoritative. While the curation of objects in museums engages with the palimpsest of history, children are often left on the outside, peering into glass cases. In this space, the child protagonist is either excluded entirely or represented as a vessel ready to be filled with the knowledge that the museum or "friendly curator" (Butler 51) seeks to convey. Children are asked to accept what Eugenio Donato calls the "fiction of the museum" (qtd. in Stewart 162): that the way a museum has displayed and represented an antiquity or a set of antiquities represents a truthful and

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Thief and *The Red Pyramid*, Fletcher's *Stoneheart* and *Dragon Shield*, Henry Neff's *The Hound of Rowan*, and Cooper's *Greenwitch*.

unchanging account of its history. This acceptance can represent the child as a tabula rasa, ready to accept knowledge, but without much agency to challenge the narrative they are presented with.

This chapter examines how LaFevers' *Theodosia Throckmorton* series and Pullman's *The Subtle Knife* challenge the authority of the museum. Rather than accepting the curation of the museum as static and inflexible, these texts offer examples of savvy child protagonists whose arcane and material knowledge of artifacts questions the historical narrative that the museum represents. They do this because both Theodosia and Lyra insist on interpreting history in ways that are outside of the narrative on display. These child protagonists place emphasis on the utility of the objects, and by doing so, they assert their own agency and expertise in interpreting those objects. By insisting upon material uses for museum objects, these children further question the fiction of the museum. Rather than reinforcing the conservation and restoration agendas so prevalent in children's novels that make use of the museum (especially conservative representations of heritage as tied to certain forms of nostalgia), one of the important interventions of these texts into the museum is that they question what these objects can and should do. Ultimately, by revealing the layers of material and historical meaning of the museum object, and refusing to blithely offer up objects of power to a static position in the museum, these novels rethink the institutional representation of history and the child's place in the museum space. Through these readings, I argue that these texts show that the museum space, made of fragments drawn from a range of landscapes, is constructed just as childhood is constructed and each of these texts enacts a kind of curation that steps out of monolithic or uncritical nostalgic readings of time and place. If curation is a political

act, these texts reach into the museum's constructed palimpsest to curate a vision of the past that interrogates both the place of the child in space and the way the past is presented to children: Lyra and Theodosia curate the museum spaces for themselves using critical reading and arcane knowledge that break with the realm of adult authority that suffuses the museum space. Children's fantasy can give children agency that rethinks the notion that museum space is both static and a realm of adult authority. Overall, these novels reinvent the relationship between the child viewer/user of antiquities and the cultural, political, and material history of the objects in the museum.

4.1: The museum as authority: Cooper's grail

The idea that a museum is the rightful place for an object is often presented as a moral imperative that can be traced to the Victorian period. This was, after all, the great age of building museums, specifically encyclopedic museums that sought to compress the entire world into a collection. The British Museum expanded so much during this period that it was, at one time, the largest building site in Britain, and, across the Atlantic, the Metropolitan Museum of Art was opened in 1879.[7] This was the age of Albert's Great Exhibition (1851), the founding of the Victoria and Albert Museum (1852), the building of the Natural History Museum in Kensington (1881), and the establishment of a suite of smaller museums across Britain; in a new era of commodification, Victorians were focused on collecting as no generation had been before. As Svetlana Boym argues, "In

[7] The British Museum was established in 1753 and moved from Montagu house into the large Greek revival building that now houses it in Bloomsbury in 1823. It was during the 1850's, however, that it began collecting objects from around the world in earnest and had to be expanded. Other earlier museums include the Ashmolean Museum (founded in 1653) that was also rehoused in a much larger building in 1840. While these museums were certainly part of the Victorian Museum Movement, "These collections differed from later Victorian museums primarily in their emphases on older, aristocratic models, focusing on Old Masters, antiquities, and curiosities" (Woodson-Boulton 119).

the mid-nineteenth century, nostalgia became institutionalized in national and provincial museums and urban memorials. The past was no longer unknown or unknowable. The past became 'heritage.' […] By the late nineteenth century nostalgia acquired public style and space" (15). Even children were exhorted to form their own collections. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart gives an example from C. Montiesor's 1890 volume for children, *Some Hobby Horses; or, How to Collect Stamps, Coins, Seals, Crests, and Scraps*:

> [E]very house ought to possess a 'Museum,' even if it is only one shelf in a small cupboard; here, carefully dated and named, should be placed pretty shells you gather on the seashore, the old fossils you find in rocks, the skeleton leaves you pick up from under the hedges, the strange orchids you find on the downs. (qtd. in Stewart 162)

Apart from the troubling suggestion that children should disturb archaeological layers and possibly rare plants for their own personal ownership, Montiesor's text suggests to child readers that they must not just *gather*, but *collect* fragments of the natural landscape in service of their 'Museum:' "Learn what you can about each object before you put it in the museum, and docket it not only with its name, but also with the name of the place in which you found it, and the date" (qtd. in Stewart 162). In Montiesor's text and others like it, children were thus introduced to the museum as a place—even if that place is a small shelf or a neatly labelled box— that must be created from fragments; it is constructed by bringing together time (labels showing when it was found) and space (labels showing where it was found), and it is made whole through assembly, categorization and preservation. Children are taught to mimic the museum collector, taking what they will and, as Stewart explains, "serving to subsume the environment to

the scenario of the personal. The ultimate term in the series that marks the collection is the 'self', the articulation of the collector's own identity" (Stewart 162). And this identity was tied to a relationship with the past. As Boym suggests, "Private collections allow one to imagine other times and places and plunge into domestic dreaming and armchair nostalgia" (15). Alongside educational non-fiction that educated the child reader about how to take part in museum-making and cheap pamphlets that told of curiosities and exotic relics, Victorian fiction for children also offered a view of the museum as an essential part of British society: "The evasive locus of nostalgia, the nomadic hearth of the imagination, was to be fixed for the sake of preservation. Memorative signs of the nation were to be found in card catalogues" (Boym 15). If the personal collection is meant to articulate the self, the public museum is represented in these texts as an articulation of the collective, the nation's image of selfhood.

The notion of museum preservation—British, French, and American preservation, in particular—carries with it problematic associations with nationhood and imperialism. In "An Empire's Great Expectations: Museums in Imperialist Boy Fiction," Barbara J. Black introduces her article by musing on the young hero's famous declaration in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*: "That cross is an important artifact! It belongs in a museum!" (qtd. in Black 235). This emphatic assertion on behalf of preservation (particularly as it serves the nation on behalf of a grand conception of civilization), and filtered down to Indiana Jones from the Victorians, is the impulse behind the donation to a museum of an object, such as the grail in *Over Sea, Under Stone* and the amulet in *The Story of the Amulet,* in a number of children's fantasies. Black explains, "As a champion of the museum, Indiana is a protector of the cultural good, the inspired rescuer of such

icons as the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail. Pitted time and again against the sinister alterity of assorted Nazi and Eastern foes, Indiana never fails to ensure the continuity of Western civilization," but he is not just a fiction of the 1980s. As Black argues, "In short, the success of the Indiana Jones series reminds us of our inheritance: the museum is one of the greatest legacies bequeathed us by the Victorians" (236).

Children's books and magazines in the Victorian era and beyond helped to reinforce the expectations of the museum in the eyes of children. Black examines Indiana Jones's precursors, such as boys' tales and magazines and focusing particularly on Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) to show that Jones's zealotry for collecting has roots within an era that was obsessed with the collection.[8] She argues, "The represented museum teaches particularly a young and un(in)formed audience about heritage, about what it is … to be English, thereby transforming children into citizens and boys into men who will honour the narrative of nationalism" (237). For these readers, heritage and nationalism are intertwined within the site of the museum, and stories of finding and/or rescuing antiquities made for thrilling tales that domesticated the world into a British collection. Though American, Indiana Jones is rich evidence for the nostalgia for this particular Victorian legacy: "Modeling children into citizens, turning boys into men, and recalling adults to their earliest fantasies by offering the utopia of a world thoroughly coded as a known and ordered realm, these tales of the museum are tales of a culture's great expectations realized" (255). While he doesn't touch on the

[8] Despite the lessons in "The urtexts for much nineteenth-century voyage literature," *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*, "that journeys lead to exhibition—whether it be of a great goat's-skin cap, an umbrella, a parrot, or a Brobdingnagian insect stinger" (239), Black argues that "Such 'museum tales' [like *The Story of the Amulet* and *Kim*) illuminate an often overlooked corner in children's literature studies; for, although scholars have long discussed the centrality of the fantastical voyage to children's tales, far less attention has been given to the significance of acquisition on these journeys" (239).

museum but rather on cheaper penny magazines of the period in "Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons," Louis James reinforces Black's conclusions about the popularity of reading materials for children that offered young boys a narrative of progress and nationalism: "Not only was the Victorian boy better than any of his ancestors, he was superior to any other human race in the nineteenth century" (91). Ordered and codified within the British Museum, the world was laid at the feet of the masculine Victorian boy.

The impulse to determine the past in terms of the restorative nostalgia of the present can be found throughout the texts associated with Victorian museums. In "Victorian Museums and Victorian Society," historian Amy Woodson-Boulton traces the contours of museum culture in the Victorian period and how Museum Studies scholarship has evolved over time. She gives some broad strokes to explain the 'Museum Movement:' "First, [museums] came out of Victorians' self-consciousness about the future, a desire to provide a legacy, proof that, as one Manchester man put it in 1860, 'we tried by our influence and means to leave the community in every respect better than we found it'" (Woodson-Boulton 112). The era's investment in the teleology of progress leads to Woodson-Boulton's second point: "museums represented a new self-consciousness about History and Time, a desire to preserve a past that seemed to be rapidly disappearing, both physically—as development destroyed actual artifacts, buildings, and landscapes—and psychologically, as the pace of change made even the previous generation seem part of a lost, ancient continuity" (112). With all of these forces at play, the curator invests the museum with a narrative of progress and preservation for the sake of nostalgic restoration, presenting the child protagonist with a carefully constructed educational experience of the museum.

To achieve this constructed experience, the museum curator reaches into the palimpsestic layers of meaning associated with an object and decides which layer or layers to convey within the museum's display. Catherine Lyon Crawford argues in "Collecting, Defacing, Reinscribing (and Otherwise Performing) Memory in the Ancient World," that "Artifacts have meaning, not from some intrinsic quality of craftsmanship or artisanship, but from the palimpsest of past associations and relationships with people" (Crawford 14). In "The Curating Child: Runaways and Museums in Children's Fiction," Zimmerman describes the curator's role in reading and manipulating this palimpsest more simply: "The individual charged with looking after and preserving the items in a collection, a curator decides how objects will mean and which meaning will be on display" (Zimmerman 47). The act of curation, in these terms, becomes authorial: "A curator excavates an object's memory and selects which layer of meaning to display" (Zimmerman 49). However, the child protagonist who is given the curated and selective text of the museum may not always know that this text has been authored and is open to interpretation and excavation.[9] This notion of the palimpsestic depths within the display and representation of objects parallels Carroll's reading of landscape in children's literature as a temporal palimpsest. In her reading of Susan Cooper's *Dark is Rising*, Carroll suggests that landscape has layers that children's fantasy novels dig down into, excavating and exploring strata of memory, history and legend. Carroll does not devote any time to the museum in her analysis, focussing instead on the sequence's landscape,

[9] Zimmerman also likens this process of curation to a child's development in her examination of two non-fantastic texts in which children run away to a museum: *The Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E Frankweiler* and *Wonderstruck*. She argues that the children in these novels learn to "curate themselves" (42) through their contact with the objects of the museum: "[T]he connection between origins and identity displayed in museums is particularly germane for children for whom the business of building a sense of self is the primary business of life" (42).

which she argues truly represents the series' relationship with time. She suggests that "even though kings and grails and ring-prowed ships are undoubtedly signs of the past, they are mere foils for the true vehicle of history and culture. In Cooper's *Sequence,* the landscape is the true focaliser of the past" (138). However, Crawford and Zimmerman suggest the object, as a fragment of landscape, has palimpsestic depths even when it is removed from the landscape itself.

Cooper's novels are particularly poignant examples of the depths of the palimpsest of landscape as the child protagonists literally seek objects of power *Over Sea, Under Stone* in the landscapes of Cornwall and Wales. In the first novel of the *The Dark Is Rising* series, Simon Jane, and Barney Drew follow clues that lead them to venture into a hidden sea cave where they literally excavate the grail and remove it from the clutches of the agents of the Dark. Rather than wielding such a powerful object themselves, the Drew children then, on the advice of Great-Uncle Merriman (secretly Merlin, working for the forces of Light), give the grail to the British Museum, where, as a symbol of the nation and an important artifact, it becomes a static object under glass.[10] In Boym's terms, this "memorative sign of the nation" is "fixed for the sake of preservation" (15) and thus heritage. The location of the object matters: while the standing stones, caves, and hills of the Cornish coast radiate with a wild power, placing the grail in the museum effectively neutralizes its use value as a fantastic object capable of world changing powers. The Drew children, likewise, are more useful when they are in the landscape at

[10] Carroll again ties the grail to the physicality of the landscape: "Because the grail is an object from the past, it cannot be found without the medium of the chthonic space. … Jane knows that the grail is ancient because it has just come out of the ground and because it was buried very deeply in the earth it had, therefore, been buried a long time ago" (151). What Carroll does not thoroughly question here is the immediate associations between *ancient* and *powerful* and how much this automatic relationship may problematically rely on nostalgia, especially when it is foregrounded with respect to children's fantasy.

work on the mysteries of the grail than when they are in the confines of the museum.

In the final chapter, the children attend a ceremony at the British Museum celebrating the grail's investiture in the collection. They are guests among adult scholars who seem to ignore them and a condescending journalist who is only eager to hear what treats the children will buy with the prize money given for retrieving the "relic" (236). The children have just saved the world (for the time being), but, in the "cool marble vastness of the museum" (232), they are *just* lucky children who happened to have stumbled upon an important artifact. While the grail is undeniably an important addition to the museum, it is one more sealed off object in "the immense gallery …[where] row upon row of identical glass cases stretched into the distance, with pots, daggers, coins, strange twisted pieces of bronze and leather and wood all shut up quiet inside like butterflies caught on pins" (234). The grail may be in "a high glass box in a place of honour" (234), but it is subsumed by the collection around it, and, "like butterflies caught on pins" (234) in both the grand and domestic Victorian collections of the day, it has been rendered lifeless by the very act of (and mania for) collecting. Its life force as a powerful object appears to be frozen, and, wandering among the adults and removed from the mysterious and fantastic landscapes of Cornwall, the Drews are also immobile like "butterflies caught on pins" (234) as their adventure ends with the vague hope that they may be privy to more of these arcane secrets sometime in the hazy future. Barney suggests to his brother and sister that the questions they have about these mysteries (the grail and the forces of Dark and Light) may someday be answered: "I think we shall know," he said slowly, "one day" (236). But, for now, the children are left on the outside. As Peter Goodritch argues in "Magical Medievalism and the Fairy Tale in Susan

Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* Sequence," while the books form a "magical pentagram" (of five books featuring five child protagonists and five types of magic objects[11]) that "casts a spell on the mundane world," (165) a major point of ambiguity in the sequence is that it "insists, in the end, on breaking the magic spell and thrusting the reader irrevocably outside the pentagram back into the mundane world" (165); the books break with the contiguous fantasy almost as if it were all a dream.

The museum, represented here as a cold institutional setting, is the ultimate metonym of the "mundane world" (165); the grail's place in the museum and the children's reduced roles in its fate reinforce this move out of the fantastic and back into quotidian reality. Butler says, "the message is clear: handled and used, artifacts retain their power and meaning; cased, labeled, and dated, they lose it" (50). The grail itself is undecipherable without a sealed manuscript that fell into the sea when the children were scrambling to get the grail before the enemy could seize upon it.[12] For now, the grail is labeled as a "Gold chalice of unknown Celtic workmanship, believed sixth century" (234);[13] even its inscriptions "were in a language nobody, from Great Uncle Merry to the museum experts, had been able to understand" (234). Without the manuscript, and labelled as a mere "gold chalice" (234), the grail has lost its "power and meaning" (Butler 50) as it takes its place among the other antiquities in the British Museum. The children, too, are part of the labelling: "Found in Trewissick, South Cornwall, and presented by Simon, Jane and Barnabas Drew" (234). The protagonists have been reduced to lucky

[11] The magic objects of note in *The Dark in* Rising are the grail, harp, sword, ship and set of six Signs of Light, which are all recovered from the landscape.
[12] This loss could also speak to the amateur nature of the children's archaeology.
[13] This label can be combined with one scholar's lofty references to the "Saxon connection … Romano-Celtic if you like, but consider the Arthurian evidence—" to which another scholar responds in "nasal disbelief" (235). Here, Cooper is clearly encouraging the reader to pursue Arthurian myth and history.

versions of the domestic child collectors hailed by Montiesor. The collection of an antiquity worthy of the British Museum is the apotheosis of the collecting spirit that Montiesor and other authors inculcated into the Victorian child, and their names on the label reduces the grail to a personal achievement: the grail "serv[es] to subsume the environment to the scenario of the personal, […] the articulation of the collector's own identity" (Stewart 162). However, the "identity" in this case—defined by adult authority—is one that the child protagonists are uncomfortable with. Thus, the Drews' part in the story loses "power and meaning" (Butler 50): "'They all seem to treat it as a kind of relic,' Jane said sadly" (236). It isn't until the third novel in the series, *Greenwitch* (1974)—when the grail is stolen from the museum, and eventually retaken by Will Staunton and the Drew children (and reunited with the manuscript)—that its potential is again unlocked.[14] It is also not until the third book in the sequence that we see the Drew children again (the second, *The Dark is Rising*, being devoted to introducing Will). For now, the museum represents stasis for the children and the grail.

4.2: Nesbit's ambivalent imperialism

The donation of an object to the British Museum figures prominently in Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), the forerunner of many children's fantasy novels that utilize contiguous fantasy. Despite the narrator's admonition in *Five Children and It* (1902) that "London is like prison for children" (2), the sequels place her time-travelling

[14] Goodritch begins his article with the opening of *Greenwitch*, a snippet from a newspaper that reports the theft of what has become known to scholars as the Trewissick Grail, worth 50,000 pounds. The newspaper quotes a museum spokesman who says, "its importance far exceeds its intrinsic value" (*Greenwitch* 496) which Goodritch remarks is "a delicious bit of irony, for anyone who had read the first two books already knows … the Grail's intrinsic value for magic far surpasses its importance to mere scholars" (165).

child protagonists in the urban landscape: The four oldest children, Cyril, Robert, Anthea, and Jane, are staying for the summer at Nurse's house in "Fitzroy Street, near the British Museum" (3). Here, they are joined by the rather ugly ancient sand fairy from their first adventures in *Five Children and It,* the Psammead, who refuses to give them any more wishes but tells them where to buy half of a powerful amulet at a curiosity shop also near the British Museum.[15] The children are determined to find the other half after they learn that its increased power can grant "your heart's desire" (24). For the children, that means bringing their father home from Manchuria, where he is on assignment for a newspaper, and their mother and The Lamb (their baby brother) home from Madeira where Mother is recuperating from an illness. As they search for the second half of the amulet, the first half—powerful in its own right—takes them on fantastical journeys to "the Past" (45), times and places in history when and where the amulet was whole (and, tellingly, times and places represented by the collections of the British Museum).

However, while Cooper's vision relies on a restorative nostalgic vision of British history in order to realize the restoration of an Arthurian past, Nesbit's use of British history and landscape is both more contemporary to the beginning of the Edwardian age and more ambivalent. Jenny Bavidge argues in "Treasure Seekers in the City: London in the Novels of E. Nesbit" that "Nesbit's work is exemplary of the literary representation of children's experience of London, which has been imagined by adults in ways that reiterate the deep anxieties about position and often the sufferings of city children, both as victims and villains within the metropolis" (46). The novel shows its child protagonists travelling in and out of consensus reality London, and Bavidge gives several examples of

[15] Written at the beginning of the Edwardian period, *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) is the third book in the series, following *Five Children and It* (1902) and *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904).

Nesbit's "ironic undermining of the structures and closed-world sentimentality of Victorian fantasy" (Bavidge 57). She argues that the "magical events and worlds help to reconcile her characters to the necessities and comforts of the real world" (57), a feature of the contiguous fantasy which offers the child protagonist layers of fantasy and consensus reality together in such a way that they may learn about both. However, Bavidge also points to the ambivalence of Nesbit's urban setting in that she uses fantasy "to dispel realist domestic anxieties and tragedies" but "[b]eyond the immediate focus of the family home, however, these escape routes are also crucially figured as flights from the misery and tedium of contemporary London" (49). A crucial place to which the children retreat within the "misery and tedium of contemporary London" is the British Museum.

Throughout the book, the prevailing quest to make whole the titular amulet (a valuable ancient relic as well as a fantastic object) makes the museum's concerns of preservation, restoration, and conservation central to the story. Following Black's assertion that "As a museum artifact, the amulet is a synecdoche for the museum itself" (247), the children, led by a naive interpretation of nationhood, are agents of both the museum and its imperial aims. Eitan Bar-Yosef argues that, in the novel, "The notion that even civilizations that have long been lost are still available for cultural appropriation is epitomized by a specific institution: the British Museum. Brimming with objects from nearly all the periods and cultures the children encounter, this great 'Imperial Archive' is both a metaphor for and a metonymy of British imperialism" (12). However, these aims are filtered through a child's lens. In one episode in Ancient Egypt, Cyril creates his own magic charm to impress the "savage" natives. As he strikes a match, he recites, "Union

Jack, Printing Press, Gunpowder, Rule Britannia! Come, Fire, at the end of this little stick!" (Nesbit 210). In another episode, when asked by the Queen of Babylon for a charm using the names of the "great ones" of his "own far country," Cyril jots down "Alfred the Great, Shakespeare, Nelson, Gordon, Lord Beaconsfield, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and Mr. Sherlock Holmes, while the Queen waited with baited breath" (Nesbit 114).[16] This almost nonsensical assertion of empire is made tangible when the Queen of Babylon, using the Psammead's power to grant wishes, comes to visit them in London.

The children, hoping to get their visitor out of the house before Nurse wakes up, take the Queen to the British Museum since, as Cyril reasons, "there are a lot of things from your country there" (142). The children decide to dress her up to hide her identity: "[Their mother's] blue silk, lace-trimmed cloak did indeed hide some of the Queen's startling splendours, but the hat fitted very badly. … [T]here was something about the coat or the hat or the Queen, that made her look somehow not very respectable" (142). Though Nesbit's novel contains more ambiguous episodes, in this sequence, the Queen's lack of fit with modern London represents the novel's overall narrative of progress, and the Queen's visit to the museum makes this thread even clearer. Once inside the museum, the Queen is unceremoniously removed by the museum staff because she "Kicked up the most frightful shine in there. Said those necklaces and things were all hers—would have them out of the cases. Tried to break the glass—she did break one a bit! Everybody in the place has been at her" (144). Here, the Queen and children are expelled from the

[16] Kipling, of course, was no stranger to the museum tale. Black argues that "*Kim's* inclusivity might be … the thoroughness of a museum's job well done; its warm affection, a museum's census-like appetite for detail. Inspired by his father's South Kensington satellite museum, which is the model for the Lahore, Kipling may have produced *Kim* as his museum piece" (244).

museum, and the Queen is denied her necklaces because they belong to the museum; the empire has subsumed them. Adorned in an old opera coat and an ill-fitting hat topped with pink flowers (144), the Queen, a great leader in her own time and place, is made into a sadly childish and "somehow not very respectable" (142) figure when set against the cool and reasonable force of the museum and the civilized empire it represents. Nesbit's story certainly draws upon the imperialist agenda of museums and the museum's representation as central to the nation-building that its collections represent; however, its reverse colonialization narrative is somewhat atypical in that, Bar-Yosef points out, the Queen of Babylon's later invasion of London offers an oddly socialist (though anti-Semitic) viewpoint, as she attacks bankers and feeds the poor during her spree:

> Nesbit's fantasy all but lacks the deep sense of anxiety which characterizes other reverse colonization narratives. What could easily have been depicted as a spectacle of horror is presented in *The Amulet* as an almost liberating experience; rather than employ the invasion scenario as a stark warning against Britain's imperial decline, Nesbit seems to welcome this shift in fortunes. (Bar-Yosef 6)

This may be because Nesbit's narrative "retreats to fairy-tale conventions" (6)—a sand fairy who can give wishes—to bring the Queen to London rather than the gothic conventions of a vengeful, dark Other who infiltrates via the very collections and objects that symbolize colonization. However, despite this change, as Michelle Smith points out, there is a fine line in Nesbit's novels between the child mediator seeing modern society as degenerate and that same society "still wishing to preserve its superiority over an otherwise idealized primitive state" (Smith 300).

Many of the more radical aspects of Nesbit's text are filtered through either the narrator or the Psammead or the Amulet itself (as a kind of interceding adult voice). Nesbit's humorous references to the imperialist agenda in Ancient Egypt, specifically the wildly popular archaeological campaigns that followed Napoleon's invasion in 1798-1801, show the ambivalence in her approach. When the Amulet speaks to the children in their nurse's house in London, it says of its history, "the Amulet lay in the dust of the desert many thousand years, and at last came a small man, a conqueror with an army, and after him a crowd of *men who sought to seem wise***,** and one of them brought it to this land" (Nesbit 111; my emphasis). The Amulet itself criticizes the antiquities hunters that followed Napoleon's campaign, but the narrator, interpreting the Amulet's words for the reader, suggests a level of ambivalence in the text: "I think it must have meant Napoleon by the small man, the conqueror. Because I know I have been told that he took an army to Egypt, and that afterwards a lot of *wise people* went grubbing in the sand, and fished up all sorts of wonderful things, older than you would think possible. And I believe this charm to have been one, and the most wonderful one of all" (Nesbit 112). Here, the narrator suggests criticism through diction— "grubbing" and "fished" (111) suggest a lack of skill—, but it refers to the archaeologists as "wise" (112), undercutting the Amulet's suggestion that they merely "sought to seem wise" (111). The children themselves do not interpret collecting or antiquity hunting other than their naïve belief that the Queen of Babylon would be happy to see her possessions safely stored under glass. The children do not have the agency or knowledge to critically intervene in any aspect of empire (or its representations) outside of a general sense that their lack of

knowledge occasionally innocently uncovers ambiguity as in the case of the Queen.[17] The naïve children themselves do not contribute complex meanings or readings to the narrative of history teased out within the novel.

In the end of the novel, the powerful amulet is made whole, restores the children's "hearts' desire—three-fold—Mother, Father and The Lamb" (292), and is given over to Jimmy, "the learned gentleman" (35) (a scholar and collector who represents the museum), who eventually donates it to the British Museum where it can no longer be used.[18] Again, the power of the fantastic is shut down by the return of an object to the museum, and, again, the child protagonists are left on the outside of the glass cases, having served empire's causes without much intervention. While Black argues that there are episodes of "what [Jack] Zipes calls an authentically liberating—because radical—vision" (249) in the text, she explains that "Travel through the amulet has fostered in the children a citizen's concern and duty as well as a cultural pride. Every journey has been a cultural lesson—indeed about other cultures but more profoundly about one's own. The exotic has served ultimately to confirm the familiar" (249). Although Nesbit challenges earlier fantasies in several ways such as placing children in the urban landscape and representing social issues within Edwardian London, for the children, the museum represents the apotheosis of the great empire as well as the safety of home. Much like the grail in *Over Sea, Under Stone*, the exotic and powerful antiquity is safely put away and labelled behind the museum doors and is no longer needed once the domestic English household is full restored: "the donation of an object to a museum is not only figured as a

[17] See below.
[18] Bar-Yosef notes that the "learned gentleman" is based on Ernest Wallis Budge, then Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquities in the British Museum, to whom the novel is dedicated.

ceding of power from children to adults, but also a transition from action to knowledge, and from use to conservation" (Butler 51). However, the protagonists in the later contiguous fantasies explored in this study approach the authority of the represented museum and the narratives it presents quite differently.

4.3: Lyra: the child authority

In *The Subtle Knife*, the second part of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, Philip Pullman's child protagonist Lyra encounters two types of "museum" in the course of her adventures: the private collection and the typologically organized Pitt Rivers Museum. Each space helps focus and shape her agency in the novel. Lyra follows her friend Will from the Oxford of her world, an alternate universe where Calvinism succeeded and the religious fanatics of the Magisterium rule over all, into his Oxford, which exists within the familiar (to readers) world of consensus reality. Led by her alethiometer—a golden compass which tells the truth (aletheia) and which only she can read without a stack of books—Lyra is looking for a scholar (physicist Mary Malone) who will help her on her journey to find her father, the Byronic Lord Asriel. Lyra, who finds our consensus reality Oxford—she calls it "mock-Oxford" (75)—discomfiting with its mixture of alienating differences and uncanny similarities to her own world, wanders into the Pitt Rivers Museum, where she comes across "a number of human skulls, and some of them had holes in them. […] This process, it said in spidery writing on the card, was called trepanning" (76). Lyra immediately recognizes this practice from an event that took place at the outset of the narrative. At the beginning of her adventures in *The Golden Compass*, Lyra's father showed a frozen head to the scholars of Jordan College and claimed it was

Stanislaus Grumman's. Grumman, of course, is Will's father John Parry, who travelled from Will's world and became a scholar, shaman, and explorer in Lyra's world. Lyra recalls the trepanning because it was during the gruesome unveiling of Grumman's head that she saw the secret conversation between her father and the scholars from her hiding place in the wardrobe in the retiring room at Jordan.[19] Several scholars have noted that Lyra begins her adventures inside a wardrobe, much like Lucy in the Narnia stories, but, according to Lauren Shohet, "the wardrobe passage offers an implicit critique of the oversimplifying directness with which Lewis deploys canonicity, in both the literary and dogmatic senses of the word" (24). From the perspective of contiguous fantasy, Pullman refuses the simple portal into an Otherworld, delaying the unfolding of other worlds in ways that use science and philosophy to explain their existence (a version of theoretical multi-verses generally referred to as the "Many-Worlds Interpretation" of quantum mechanics);[20] there are fantastical things to be seen in Pullman's worlds—talking bears, witches, and daemons among them—but Pullman figures them as possible in Lyra's world, just a step away from consensus reality. There will be no awkward stumbling in

[19] It was during this episode that she also saw her father explain "Dust" to the reluctant scholars. Alternately referred to in the series as Rusakov particles, "shadows," and elementary particles, Pullman's "Dust" springs from the scientific theory of Dark Matter and is intimately related to consciousness.

[20] In Lyra's world, the Many-Worlds Interpretation is known as the Barnard-Stokes Hypothesis. As the Master of Jordan College explains,

> Barnard and Stokes were two—how shall I put it—renegade theologians who postulated the existence of numerous other worlds like this one, neither heaven nor hell, but material and sinful. They are there, close by, but invisible and unreachable. The Holy Church naturally disapproved of this abominable heresy, and Barnard and Stokes were silenced. But unfortunately for the Magisterium there seem to be sound mathematical arguments for this other-world theory. (*Golden Compass* 30).

The extreme dogmatism of the Magisterium has, here, divided the world into two categories: the material and the spiritual. The theoretical has been cast into the category of spiritual and the spiritual is interpreted by the church alone. The symbolic is not something that is available to everyone unless it is read for them by the Magisterium, similar to the pre-Lutheran ideals of the Catholic Church. Other than in the case of renegade scholars, the Magisterium is the structure through which all interpretation must occur: Logos is controlled. However, Lyra has her alethiometer.

and out of a pseudo-medieval world for Lyra.[21] Instead, Pullman's text keeps the child protagonist firmly in the fictional world of all of the adult problems that begin the books (the mundane need for research funding, and college politics inflected by the authoritarian threat of the Magisterium being prime among them); she will not be faced with allegories that threaten her world but, instead, with the actual threats themselves. She is, however, armed with the alethiometer, the arcane device that uses Dust to answer questions by pointing to symbols (it was gifted to her by the Master of Jordan who took it from the college's collections and pressed it on Lyra as she left Jordan). Distracted by the memory of Grumman, she consults it when confronted by the trepanned skulls at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

While these skulls may seem like exotic curiosities within the museum's display cases, Lyra connects them to much larger questions. She has the knowledge to suspect greater mysteries and to ask questions: "Lyra, absorbed, was learning strange things. These skulls were unimaginably old; the cards in the case said simply BRONZE AGE, but the alethiometer, which never lied, said that the man whose skull it was had lived 33,254 years before the present day, and had been a sorcerer, and that the hole had been

[21] Pullman's use of the Many-Worlds Theory suggests that there are infinite universes which diverge from one another at crucial historical junctures (what Pullman brings to life is moving between these worlds, something scientists currently say is impossible). Lyra's universe appears to have diverged from consensus reality during the Renaissance. In Lyra's world John Calvin succeeded in his campaign of reform and became pope, bringing the papacy to Geneva and later abolishing it altogether in favour of the authoritarian Consistorial Court of discipline. In a grand sense, this can be read as a form of contiguity because the worlds are intimately aligned. However, Lyra's foray into Will's Oxford—the Oxford of consensus reality—is where we see the use of contiguous fantasy that is similar to the other books here. Pullman, however, turns fantasy on its head by using consensus reality as the world to which Lyra arrives through a portal. In this way, he turns the portal fantasy on its head by offering a protagonist who is becoming acclimatized to a world that is intimately known to the reader rather than allowing the reader to follow along with a protagonist (like Lucy) who is learning about a strange new world. In this way, Pullman collapses categories of the fantastic, making consensus reality subject to interpretation (through Will who is at home in his own world but also affected by Lyra's fear and alienation and through Lyra, who sees consensus reality Oxford through eyes of trepidation and wonder).

made to let the gods into his head" (77). Lyra also learns that "there was a good deal more Dust around the trepanned skulls than the one with the arrowhead" (77), a clue to the mysteries of human consciousness that will later help convince the scholar Mary Malone to take Lyra seriously. Here, Lyra, through her alethiometer, is not only more knowledgeable than the curators of the Pitt Rivers, but she's also privy to the arcane knowledge that is at the heart of the great debates and wars fought throughout the multi-verse. Lyra's alethiometer itself may seem like a magical or museum object—"something like a large watch or small clock: a thick disk of gold and crystal" with a face surrounded by symbols (*The Golden Compass* 73)—but the text explains that it is animated by the same Dark Matter that people in Lyra's world call "Dust." The alethiometer may hold the answers to many mysteries, but it is an essential tool rather than a static relic, as Lyra learns when Sir Charles Latrom steals it.[22]

Sir Charles, or Lord Carlo Boreal as he is known in Lyra's world, steals the alethiometer after seeing Lyra using it at the Pitt Rivers, and places it in his study, which "seemed to be full of bookshelves, pictures, and hunting trophies. There were three or four glass-fronted cabinets containing antique scientific instruments—brass microscopes, telescopes covered in green leather, sextant, compasses" (162). For Lyra and Will, "it was clear why he wanted the alethiometer" (162). Sir Charles is the armchair collector that Boym discusses: "Private collections allow one to imagine other times and places and plunge into domestic dreaming and armchair nostalgia" (15). He wants to make the alethiometer a part of his collection because its rarity gives him personal gratification: "The ultimate term in the series that marks the collection is the 'self', the articulation of

[22] Sir Charles/Lord Boreal's pseudonym "Latrom" spells "mortal" backwards; this is ironic since Mrs. Coulter later kills him.

the collector's own identity" (Stewart 162) even if that is the selfish and indulgent identity of Sir Charles. As Lyra and Will ask for it back, he "swung around and placed the alethiometer in a glass-fronted cabinet before locking it and dropping the key in his waistcoat pocket" (162). The alethiometer is behind glass and sequestered away from the child protagonists who yearn to make use of it instead of watching it become static in a collection. For two children alone in Oxford and on the run from the authorities, the glass of the curio cabinet represents a powerful barrier. While Sir Charles is invested in a personal collection rather than a public one, his "museum" is still a realm of adult authority, supported by the institutional machinery of wealth and law enforcement which the children cannot call upon: "The instrument is in my possession and will stay there. I want it. I'm a collector. You can spit and stamp and scream all you like, but by the time you've persuaded anyone else to listen to you, I shall have plenty of documents to prove that I bought it" (164).[23] Here, the child protagonists are subject to a menacing adult authority within the museum space, but Lyra and Will won't abandon the alethiometer to his possession.

Sir Charles' title of self-proclaimed title of "collector" moves him from an unknown potential foe to a much more daunting enemy committed to the mania of ownership, but he indicates he'll consider trading the alethiometer for the titular Subtle

[23] Apart from the planned *The Book of Dust* that is set to be published in Fall 2017, Pullman has authored several additional publications that add to the world in *His Dark Materials*, including *Lyra's Oxford* (2003) and *Once Upon a Time in the North* (2008), but his most recently available publication related to the series is a short story that was originally only released on audiobook called "The Collectors" (2015). This story is set in the consensus reality of Oxford College, Oxford. The story unravels the history of a painting of a beautiful young woman and a bronze sculpture of monkey (alluding to Mrs. Coulter and her daemon) that have ended up, through mysterious circumstances, being sold to the same collectors at different times through the years. The owners of these objects—all serious collectors who yearn to own the beautiful young woman's painting—end up dying. The story suggests both that objects have a life force attached to them outside of provenance, collection, and cataloguing and that the mania to collect can be a dangerous folly (especially when Mrs. Coulter is at all involved).

Knife, an artifact that can slice through between worlds, creating openings. Rather ingeniously, Lyra and Will use the knife (another tool rather than relic that Sir Charles wishes to add to his personal collection) to cut through from one world to another in order to steal back the alethiometer. By cutting through from a place in Cittàgazze (another alternate world where Will wins the Subtle Knife in a fight that maims his hand) to Sir Charles' study, Lyra and Will disrupt the adult authority of the personal museum, breaking apart space to undo the threat of the collection. Both the knife and the alethiometer would be rendered static behind glass, but these savvy child protagonists must use these objects to pursue their quest.

This episode with the alethiometer and the knife takes up much of the action in *The Subtle Knife*. The threat that the alethiometer will become an unused part of a collection (Sir Charles can't read it; only Lyra can) much like the "relic" of Cooper's grail, is what spurs Will to retrieve the knife and bring it together with the alethiometer; the objects—seemingly magical but each explained through arcane science—are essential to the child protagonists' quests. Fittingly, this arc of the story starts at a museum. Lyra, seeking a quiet place to read her alethiometer, wanders into the Pitt Rivers Museum, and her attention is drawn to a display of Northern artifacts:

> Well, how strange. Those caribou-skin furs were exactly the same as hers, but they'd tied the traces on that sledge completely wrong. But here was a photogram showing some Samoyed hunters, the very doubles of the ones who'd caught Lyra and sold her to Bolvanger. Look! They were the same men! And even that rope had frayed and been reknotted in precisely the same spot, and she knew it intimately, having been tied up in that very sledge for several agonizing hours ….

> What were these mysteries? Was there only one world after all, which spent its time dreaming of others?" (76).

Lyra has spent much of the last several months on an expedition to the arctic of her world to save kidnapped children, and she therefore comes to the museum with general knowledge of arctic adventurers' gear and what she feels is intimate knowledge of this particular sledge. Stubborn and perceptive, Lyra immediately questions the authority of the museum's display: "they'd tied the traces on that sledge completely wrong" (76). As Butler suggests about the museum more broadly, Pullman's text figures the museum here as "a place committed to knowledge of and preservation of the past. Nevertheless, it may form an obstacle to the proper and traditional function of objects, or at best a less satisfactory alternative to it" (51). Lyra is unsatisfied because, through her journey, she has gained the material knowledge to question the curator's decisions and to recognize the use value of objects considered curiosities and antiquities in this Oxford—to her, the display showcases necessary gear for an arctic explorer in a less modernized world without synthetic materials: "in this second chamber she found herself surrounded by things she knew well: there were showcases filled with Arctic clothing, just like her own furs" (76). She also has the arcane knowledge that prompts her, upon witnessing this museum display, to question the "mysteries" of overlapping universes. Her questioning not only shatters the remove between the museum visitor and the object behind glass, but it also questions the very nature of existence. Is it the same sledge? Do the worlds overlap so much so that the reknotted rope suffered exactly the same fate in both worlds? This refusal shows Lyra to be a critical consumer of the historical narrative the museum seeks to convey. The text also seems to provide an implicit acknowledgment that, similar to the

overlapping universes of *The Subtle Knife*, there are multiple worlds available within this world—the world of the museum—depending on how the museum's objects represent the narrative of history.

The novel doesn't name the museum, but it describes Lyra walking towards the park from Oxford's Covered Market, "which was much more like proper Oxford" (75), to the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, "a real Oxford-looking building" with a "great iron-and-glass hall" (75), and into a second museum. With these clear directions, we can place her at the famous Pitt Rivers Museum.[24] Wandering through this "disconcertingly different" Oxford, "with patches of poignant familiarity right next to the downright outlandish" (74), Lyra, looking for a place to consult her alethiometer, chooses the adjoining Natural History Museum because it is a "grand building, a real Oxford-looking building that didn't exist in her world at all, though it wouldn't have looked out of place" (75). Lyra looks at this building "approvingly" (75) and decides to seek quiet and refuge there, which leads her into the adjoining Pitt Rivers.[25] Even the savvy heroine, brought up as she has been by scholars at an ancient college of Oxford, is captivated by grand buildings that impress a sense of superiority upon the viewer. In her reading of the non-fantastic texts Brian Selznik's *Wonderstruck* (2011) and E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil Frankweiler* (1967), Zimmerman says that these protagonists "are not so much running away from home as they are running toward a richer sense of a self in context, and they choose museums as the best places to find what

[24] Philip Pullman is a patron of the Friends of the Museum organization at Pitt Rivers as is fellow children's author Penelope Lively, whose novel *The House in Norham Gardens* (1974) prominently features the museum and its famous shrunken heads.

[25] The Pitt Rivers itself bases its displays on typological displays; rather than placing objects of one culture or time period in subsequent cases, the museum places types of objects together ("History of the Museum and Its Displays").

they seek" (45). While the runaway children in the novels that Zimmerman reads are also seeking refuge inside a museum, they do so somewhat differently, as they actually live inside the museums. While living inside a museum and using its furniture and objects as domestic spaces may seem to reinvigorate the use value of these objects, the children's integration into the museum and its environs lends itself much more readily to Zimmerman's reading that the museum teaches the children to "curate themselves" within the confines of the museum's narratives than characters like Lyra, whose skepticism presents a warier view of the museum and its fictions; Lyra enacts a more skeptical kind of curation. She brings context with her to the museum, upending the expectation that the museum offers wisdom that the child is longing for. Lyra is less interested in the conservation of an object within a historical narrative that she sees is inappropriate and more interested in the material truth and abstract possibilities of the object.

4.4: Theodosia's arcane scholarship

While Lyra stops briefly at the Pitt Rivers, the *Theodosia Throckmorton* series by R.L. LaFevers places her heroine firmly within one of the more ubiquitous styles of museums, the Ancient Egyptian collection.[26] Much like Lyra, Theodosia refuses the narrative constructed by the museum in search of a more complex and satisfying history of the objects that fascinate her. Theodosia spends all of her time in the Museum of

[26] The series comprises *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos* (2007), *Theodosia and the Staff of Osiris* (2008), *Theodosia and the Eyes of Horus* (2010), and *Theodosia and the Last Pharaoh* (2011). LaFevers, the author of several other children's and YA series, promises on her web site that there is another volume, *Theodosia and the Flame of Sekhmet,* to come after 2020. For the purposes of this study, I'll focus on the first two books of series.

Legends and Antiquities, based on London's Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, where her absent-minded parents are curators. Located just south of Gordon Square Gardens and Tavistock Square within the University College of London, the Petrie was established during the Victorian Museum Movement in 1892.[27] In 1913, Professor William Matthew Flinders Petrie donated his massive collection to the museum, placing its collections among the largest and most prominent in the world outside Egypt. It is clear in the text that the fictional Museum of Legends and Antiquities is a stand in for the very real Petrie Museum because LaFevers describes its location within a few short blocks of the British Museum, and Theodosia explains that she is not allowed to go farther than Oxford Street in one direction and Euston Road in the other.[28] Unlike Lyra's travels in the consensus reality of Will's world, Theodosia's wanderings are circumscribed within the London of the Edwardian period (with several trips to Edwardian Egypt throughout the series). LaFevers nods at Nesbit's obvious influence in a scene in which Theodosia's brother, freshly home from boarding school, "curled himself up in the chair in front of the fire with his new book, *The Treasure Seekers*" (166).[29] Nesbit's *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899) pre-dates the Psammead trilogy, though Theodosia remarks upon contemporary events that place these books firmly in the

[27] The museum was first created with funds and antiquities from a bequest by writer Amelia Edwards, who also co-founded the Egypt Exploration Fund and wrote a travelogue called *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877).

[28] Other than the re-naming of the museum, the place names in the novel are real. Where LaFevers takes liberty is in her depiction of access to the museum and the breadth of its collections. In the Edwardian period, the museum was only open to scholars and students and had not yet received Petrie's bequest that made it the large collection that Theodosia describes; however, today it is open to the public and offers programs for visitors, and it houses more than 80,000 objects. LaFevers seems to imagine the museum as if today's version were placed in Edwardian London. Like the Pitt Rivers that Lyra visits, the Petrie is also a typological museum.

[29] The Bastables' series is comprised of *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Wouldbegoods* (1899), and *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904).

Edwardian period.[30] Interestingly, C.S. Lewis did something similar when he noted on the first page of *The Magician's Nephew:* "In those days Mr Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street and the Bastables were looking for treasure in the Lewisham Road" (Lewis 1). The Bastables, of course, are the children featured in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*. Whereas Lewis imagines the Bastables inhabiting the same world as Polly Plummer from *The Magician's Nephew*, enhancing the fictional and nostalgic Edwardian world of his books, LaFevers firmly relegates Nesbit's characters to fiction, asserting that her world is the "real" one and we can treat it as a contiguous fantasy because, despite small changes to the museum itself, it portrays fantasy contiguous with Edwardian consensus reality.

In *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos*, Theodosia's mother is off in Egypt acquiring antiquities, while her daughter stays at the museum with her father, even sleeping at night in a spare sarcophagus:

> I spend most of my time clattering around this old place. I don't mind. Really. Well, not much anyway. Though it would be nice if Father remembered I was here once in a while … However, I've got plenty to do. The museum's got loads of secrets, and I've discovered I'm very good at ferreting out secrets. And curses. You'd be surprised at how many things come into the museum loaded with curses—bad ones. Ancient, dark, Egyptian-magic ones. (*Serpents of Chaos* 4)

[30] In *Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos,* 11-year-old Theodosia discloses that "[l]ong ago when I was only two" (46), her father was betrayed by "Victor Loretti," who took credit for finding the tomb of Thutmose III. Since Victor Loret found that tomb in 1898, and nine years have passed in the novel, the first Theodosia book is set in 1906-1907. R.L. LaFevers' blog features a scrapbook of events from 1907, which she places as contemporary with the fourth book in the series, *Theodosia and the Last Pharaoh*.

The cursed object bringing its malevolence to London is not a new trope,[31] but Theodosia discovers that the truly dangerous objects like the Heart of Egypt, which her mother, unaware of the curse it carries, retrieves from the tomb of Amenemhab, are being used and deployed by a secret sect called the Serpents of Chaos. In the first book, it's revealed that Egyptologists run the sect. A curator from the British Museum—here, the British Museum is represented as a grasping institution obsessed with hoarding collections— and German archaeologists (possibly referencing the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin) take part in the dastardly plan to undermine British sovereignty by weakening England's position in their negotiations with Kaiser Wilhelm in the long run up to World War One. The true danger—the savage 'Other' similar to the Queen of Nesbit's trilogy and enacted by many gothic novels as a "foreign" curse than invades the imperial city—comes instead from within the realm of antiquities acquisition, from within Europe and from within Britain itself. As Sticky Will, a pickpocket whom she befriends, and who thinks that curses are all about adventure, says, "Blimey, miss. This is just like one of them penny dreadfuls" (120).[32] While Lyra is annoyed, the irony of Sticky Will's awed evocation of the "penny dreadfuls" is that without Theodosia, who solves the case, the curse would look exactly like a familiar gothic plot (discussed in Chapter 2, page 91, n. 36). As Ailise Bulfin in "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal" suggests, "The typical plot turns upon modern English trespass into an Ancient Egyptian tomb, the misappropriation and removal of a mummy or its artifacts

[31] For example, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Bram Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903).
[32] Somewhat like Nesbit, *Theodosia*'s critique of the age of archaeological exploration in Egypt certainly contains its own measures of ambivalence. For example, the text offers a critical view of Theodosia's mother's dismissive attitude towards the Egyptian Independence Movement (she sees it as a roadblock to her collecting, where Theodosia compares the poor Egyptians to the faces she sees in the Seven Dials in London).

back to England, and the unleashing of a curse which sees an ancient supernatural invader exacting revenge in the heart of the imperial metropolis" (Bulfin 413). Theodosia, however, by discovering the plan actually comes from an agent of the Serpents of Chaos within British Museum—"this great 'Imperial Archive'" (Bar-Yosef 12)—shows, as Riordan does with his treatment of Ancient Egypt in North America, that children's fantasy can re-interpret narratives that reflect anxieties about imperialism. And this re-interpretation comes in the form a child protagonist whose control and authority over the museum space breaks with previous representations of the child in the museum.

Where Nesbit's amulet and its great powers ultimately end up behind glass in the British Museum, that great repository of empire, Theodosia repatriates the Heart of Egypt (this becomes a theme in the series; Theodosia enacts repatriation three times in the books). Theodosia's acts of repatriation acknowledge the problem of colonial appropriation, suggest that these museum objects are political as well as magical. However, there is a measure of ambivalence here: while Theodosia's acts of repatriation clearly undermine the excesses of her mother's collecting, Theodosia is also proud of her mother and her mother's work. Nevertheless, Theodosia's arcane knowledge is given precedence over her mother's traditional knowledge. Children's fantasy can give children agency that rethinks the notion that museum space is both static and a realm of adult authority. Theodosia's acts suggest that museums don't need every object and that some objects rightfully belong in the place where they were found (in the case of the Heart of Egypt, a tomb in the Valley of the Kings) rather than being subject to a narrow definition of preservation and conservation. While Butler says that museums are "typically figured as temples of narrowly-defined fact" (Butler 51), Theodosia pursues her own knowledge

that supersedes the knowledge of the adults around her. Theodosia's arcane knowledge of the antiquities in her parents' museum, LaFevers' representation of the parents/curators as sometimes ignorant and often selfish, and Theodosia's acts of repatriation all undercut the typical figuration of the museum space itself. Theodosia's decisions that take into account the problematic issues surrounding antiquity removal and cultural imperialism, suggests that, since they are outside of the systems of the adult world, child protagonists are uniquely situated to challenge the pattern of the uncritical reliance on the ancient/past/primitive as a fantasy trope.

Theodosia may be a young girl, but, like Lyra, she is the conduit of arcane knowledge. Even when Theodosia meets with a group of secret magic users, the Brotherhood of the Chosen Keepers (headquartered in London and headed by an aristocrat, Lord Wigmere, of course), Theodosia soon learns that their large—masculine—operation doesn't necessarily have the arcane knowledge or the ability to deal with curses that she has. Theodosia, as a budding academic, uses curse nullification and charms based on books and rubbings from tombs and temples: "Father has taught me that when all clues fail to lead to a solid conclusion, there is research. Piles and piles of it. Of course, Father didn't realize what I'd spend my time studying, but the fact of the matter was, research is my only defense" (*Serpents of Chaos* 22). Theodosia's knowledge, augmented by her natural gift of seeing curses, is based on the studious interpretation of texts of the real world and real history, rather than a single amulet or charm of Nesbit's fiction that reduces Ancient Egypt to a monolithic construction. Early on, LaFevers introduces the reader to Theodosia's methods of curse extraction, which, while obviously magical, are treated in the logical and almost mundane manner of any

other researcher deeply involved in his or her area of research: "I adore hieroglyphs. Some people love to draw and others have a way with music and still others love puzzles, but hieroglyphs are my favourite thing. To me, they make clear and perfect sense, as if they were the way we're supposed to communicate" (34). In a small room she has claimed as an "office," Theodosia works away at curse nullification (parallel to the adults in the museum working on artifact research): "I sat among arcane texts bound in leather and held together by buckles and straps, ancient clay tablets filled with rows and rows of hieroglyphs, and scrolls of parchment and papyrus on which ancient priests and sorcerers made their notations" (24). Like many 11-year-olds, Theodosia is endlessly annoyed by adults—in her eyes, fellow academics—who don't understand what she does, and by outsiders like her brother and Sticky Will, but, unlike many traditional child protagonists, Theodosia enacts radical reading of the objects of the museum.

Like Lyra, whose skill reading the alethiometer is a subversive act in both her world where the Magisterium holds sway over interpretation but also in consensus reality Oxford where she uses her knowledge to question both the museum and traditional scholarship, Theodosia's scholarship is far from the naiveté of Nesbit's children or the Drews from Cooper's *Dark Is Rising* who are led to their quest by an adult, free to adventure in the pastoral landscape but stymied by the institution of the museum. For both Lyra and Theodosia, a large part of their agency—and their ability to conduct subversive readings—comes from their use of objects that others see as subject to preservation. Unlike the British Museum, which is depicted by Nesbit as a repository of empire and by Cooper as a space of stasis where objects are "like butterflies caught on pins" (234), Sir Charles' personal museum, the Pitt Rivers, and the Museum of Legends

and Antiquities (and its real counterpart, the Petrie) use typological displays which group objects by their uses and types. Rather than an encyclopedic museum which seeks the harness the power of an entire culture within wide-ranging and chronologically driven displays (that, in some ways, attempt to lay bare the entire historical palimpsest of a culture), Sir Charles' collection features antique scientific instruments from different places and times, the Pitt Rivers display that Lyra visits shows Northern gear (and examples of trepanning) from different times and cultures displayed together, and the Petrie groups together types of Ancient Egyptian and Sudanese goods across millennia. For Lyra and Theodosia, these objects are still of the present and have uses other than display. While a "collector" like Sir Charles or even a contemporary reader may see the objects on display as relics that should be preserved, for Lyra (because she comes from a less technologically advanced world), these Northern objects—not to mention her alethiometer which Sir Charles would place under glass along with his other instruments—are everyday, necessary goods, and, for Theodosia, the objects still have critical uses because her "work" of curse-nullification requires them. Through their approach to objects, these child protagonists upend agendas of conservation, preservation and restoration. Rather than accepting the curation of the museum as static and unyielding, these child protagonists have arcane and material knowledge of the artifacts that questions the historical narrative that they represent, and this knowledge grants them the agency to put their critical thought into action.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: The Phoenix (and the Carpet) of History

> *Despite our daily observations to the contrary, I assure you that children are, by nature, spiritual beings, until we destroy through our example. In my own field of language I remember, and still can see, there being no problem here. A child knows, whether it be in the traditional structure of a fairy tale, or the special use of an archaism, when Mystery is engaged.*
>
> —Alan Garner, *The Voice That Thunders*

Rick Riordan's *The Kane Chronicles*, Charlie Fletcher's *Stoneheart* trilogy, R.L. LaFevers' *Theodosia* series, and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* each offer a contiguous fantasy in which protagonists access the fantastic within the world around them, and each text interacts with the fantastic through the landscape n ways that manipulate the conventions of the fantasy genre. Rather than relying upon pseudo-medieval fantasy landscapes that draw upon expected conventions imbued with nostalgia, the texts use consensus reality. And, rather than pastoral landscapes that perform a nostalgic spatializing of the child, these texts interact with place and space in unexpected ways. Whether it is through the recreations of Classical forms and ancient antiquities in the American landscape, the many varied statues of London, or the antiquities in London and Oxford's museums, these texts show how story and history become layered together within the landscape, exposing the complex relationship between time and space. These texts then access these intricate layers in order to build their fantastic elements in ways that both circumvent expectations of the fantasy and children's literature genres and imbue their characters with agency.

Some texts enact the curation of time and space in a richer way than others, exposing the layers in a more complex way, while others have a relatively simpler

relationship with the past. While Riordan acknowledges the other mythologies within his own canon (references to Camp Halfblood in Long Island, for example), the text suggests that America is, in some ways, a clean canvas for the chief antagonist of *The Red Pyramid*, the Ancient Egyptian god, Set. Set builds his red pyramid, the heart of his power that will unleash chaos, in the Arizona desert at Phoenix's Cambelback Mountain: "'Phoenix. How appropriate! And the desert so much like home! All it needs is to be scoured of life. The desert should be a sterile place, don't you think?'" (Riordan 64). The text sets up Camelback Mountain as an easily coopted space—Carter refers to it as a "barren mountain" (63)—and, therefore, open to Set's intrusion. "Phoenix" is the Greek word for the "bennu" of ancient Egyptian mythology, and as I discuss in Chapter 2 and Set makes clear, the desert has obvious associations with ancient Egypt. This makes Camelback mountain an appropriate choice for the text because Set believes that the symbolism in the city name "Phoenix" gestures towards his rebirth, and the desert setting works within the larger conceit of identifying ancient Egyptian resonances within the American landscape. The choice of "Phoenix" also works as foreshadowing because, in ancient Egyptian texts, the bennu is often associated with either Osiris or Ra. Carter and Sadie, children of the newly established Osiris, defeat Set at the Red Pyramid, and, in the next two books of the series, bring back the sun god, Ra. So, rather than a rebirth of Set's powers of chaos, the setting of Phoenix works as the first in a three-part arc that marks a rebirth of stability. However, Set's pyramid-building in America also appeals to an anachronistic ideal of the frontier as an uninhabited landmass where American culture looks towards ancient Egypt for forms and symbols.

In order to keep the ancient Egyptian narrative free from contact with other

mythologies and histories, Riordan creates an absence where other historical layers could be represented. This absence includes indigenous peoples and their mythologies and histories; Camelback mountain has a long history in the American landscape. It was a centre of religious significance for the pre-historic Hohokam Indians, and it was, in 1879, declared an Indian Reservation on behalf of the Salt River Pima and Maricopa Indians only for that decision to be quickly reversed due to the efforts of officials and non-native residents. In the 20th century, the citizens of Phoenix engaged in protracted disagreements over whether the mountain should be preserved or developed. In "The Straw That Broke the Camel's Back: Preservation of an Urban Mountain Landscape," Josh Protas discusses the decades-long civic and legal battles that culminated in the 1968 decision to make the area into a city park. He argues that "The preservation of Camelback Mountain is significant in that it illustrates the contested nature of both the mental and physical landscapes in Phoenix and in the West" (380). Rather than a blank canvas for Set's pyramid, Camelback has its many layers of history that complicate the older narratives of an uninhabited and romanticized western frontier.

Riordan's text certainly digs into various strata of history, particularly 19th-century American Egyptomania, but the text's main conceit of ancient Egypt forms and symbols in America often leaves other layers of the palimpsest unexplored because its chief goal is correlation between two points in history—ancient Egypt and modern America— rather than a more nuanced exploration of the layers within the landscape. R. L. LaFevers' *Theodosia* series works similarly. The series' dedication to Edwardian London and its antiquities hunters offers twists on tropes of Edwardian children's literature and a relatively modern appraisal of the annexation of Egypt's ancient

antiquities, but the series' central concern of connecting two points—the politics of Edwardian London and its relationship to Egypt and the curses of ancient Egypt—does not leave as much room for the curatorial decisions Fletcher and Pullman can achieve in their texts.

Fletcher and Pullman's texts allow for a more multivalent approach to time and space. Fletcher's text enacts this with the specific choices of statues, choosing statues such as the Gunner, Boadicea, and Mr. Dictionary that speak to different eras and stories within the city's history and mythology; each one of these statue characters is, in their own way, unexpected, and each rejects a simplified nostalgia for London's past. Since Pullman's texts make use of larger historical currents with interpretations of Judeo-Christian mythology to reject restorative nostalgia in a larger sense, and *The Subtle Knife's* episodes concerned with the museum and the collection show Lyra refusing the authority of both the historical narrative offered by the museum and the authority of a personal collection. These episodes are a clear example of the text's overall rejection of the romanticized child.

In all of these texts, the intertwined nature of fantasy and consensus reality imbues the protagonists with agency. In *Stoneheart*, George's skills as a maker and Edie's access to the past through glinting allow the protagonists not only entry into the fantastic but mastery within it. For the Kane siblings, their particular knowledge gives them the agency to make choices about the old hierarchies within the House of Life. Apart from magic, Carter has lived his life travelling alongside his Egyptologist father and can interpret and recognize history and myth, and his sister, Sadie, can read hieroglyphs. Theodosia, with her arcane and practical knowledge of the museum and its

antiquities, questions the traditional image of the child in the museum and uses her knowledge to stop the curses infecting England and unmask the antiquity hunters who planted them. Lyra, with her critical reading of the alethiometer which gives her access to mysteries of the multiverse, not only questions the status quo of the museum but recognizes her own missteps in trusting Sir Charles Latham and, with Will, recovers her alethiometer. Rather than sweeping the child protagonist along in a quest, each of these texts offer savvy child protagonists whose skill at reading the spaces around them makes them agents of change. Rather than embracing the nostalgia of earlier children's fantasy landscapes, these books offer child protagonists whose way of inhabiting the world (as well as their physical position in it) produces a radical shift in how child protagonists interact with history, landscape, place, and space. These child protagonists are critical thinkers rather than dreamers.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, Jenny Bavidge's "Stories in Space: The Geographies of Children's Literature" suggests that we need a re-examination of the landscapes at work in children's literature. Recalling a number of classics that rely upon the rural idyll or enclosed urban spaces, she says, "The places of these fictions have likewise become *the setting* of versions of childhood. […] Indeed their images are so abiding that they have come to operate as metonyms for childhood itself" (324). This is where scholarship can make a crucial intervention. When we deconstruct that metonymic status as opposed to accepting certain landscapes, places, and spaces as "*the setting*" for children's literature, we can uncover how these books are engaging with and manipulating space and place and uncover how that engagement and manipulation speaks to wider concerns such as the construction of the child, the portrayal of children's agency, and issues of nostalgia and

heritage. Bavidge suggests that scholarship has not yet paid enough attention to the ways that children are portrayed within their surroundings: "children's literary criticism has not paid enough attention to questions of spatiality (particularly urban space) and has rarely attempted to theorize the nature of place and space in children's literature" (323). This is particularly true of children's fantasies which foreground place and space as rhetorically inextricable from the fantastic. As I also show in Chapter 1, Jane Suzanne Carroll echoes Bavidge's call in her reading of landscape in *The Dark is Rising* sequence, as do geographer Owain Jones and literary critic Tony Watkins, who advocates in "Space, History and Culture: The Setting of Children's Literature" for literary scholars to make use of cultural geography "which explores ideas of landscape, spatiality, utopia, globalisation, heritage and national identity, and geographies of gender and race [… and] could prove vital for the cultural study of children's literature" (Watkins 67). Within the ever-growing and ever-more-popular genre of children's fantasy, in particular, studies of space, place, and landscape could prove even more vital as we look towards new children's fantasy that resists the doubled generic pressures of the circumscribed child and the hegemonic pseudo-medieval British fantasy world. There are many new children's and YA fantasy novels that offer contiguous fantasy episodes within their stories or that alter consensus reality in meaningful ways outside of the narrower definition of contiguous fantasy that I have offered here.[33] Each interacts with time and space, history and place, story and landscape in ways illuminated by this dissertation's reading of the palimpsest.

[33] See Chapter 1, note 10 and Chapter 2, note 33.

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